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Dedication

Om

Dedicated to all Aspirants

Treading the Path of Devotion

Om

OM

Ananda Kutir,
6th August 1941.

Dear Narayan,

Bhakti is supreme love of God. It is the Kohinoor in the crown of devotees. It blossoms afterwards into Jnana. It leads to immortality or God-realisation.

Cultivate it through Satsanga, Japa, Kirtan, Prayer, Meditation and Service of Bhaktas.

Life without devotion is real death. Remember Prahlada, Dhruva. You will draw inspiration.

Worldliness, Vasanas, cravings, pride, attachment, egoism and lust are enemies of devotion. Kill them. Do total self-surrender unto the Lord.

May your heart be filed with devotion? May you abide in the Lord forever and ever.

OM

Ananda Kutir
8th August 1941.

Beloved Govind,

Kirtan is singing Lord's Name. It is the easiest, surest and safest way for attaining God.

Kirtan is nectar. Kirtan is divine food for the soul. Kirtan can make you immortal.

Sing the Maha-Mantra,

Hare Rama Hare Rama,Rama Rama Hare Hare;
Hare Krishna Hare Krishna,Krishna Krishna Hare Hare.

May you attain God through Kirtan.

INTRODUCTION

The world is now passing through a great crisis due to the present wars. Rajasic evil forces of materialism are flying aloft in the sky deluding the people with fears and anxieties and keeping them in the dark about the existence of the inner Atmic treasure and Supreme Bliss within. People look upon religion with contempt. Ignorance prevails everywhere. There is lack of faith in the Vedic scriptures or there has been a misunderstanding of it in some quarters. People interpret religion to suit their taste and convenience. They pretend to know everything.

In fact, there is no spiritual growth in most of the people now-a-days. There is no real education. There is no culture. There is no ethical training. When the lamp of knowledge–the lamp of devotion to God–is lit up then all these dark forces of Rajas will fly away and there will be peace, harmony, good understanding and universal brotherhood. Sattva will reign supreme and there will be happiness everywhere.

The book ***"Bhakti and Sankirtan"*** contains very useful instructions for the students in the path of Bhakti Yoga. First of all, I have proved with practical illustrations the existence of God for the conviction of rank materialists and atheists. The first chapter contains the essence of Bhakti Sadhana. I have stressed the importance of worship, Bhajan, Upasana, Manasic Puja, etc., as a means to develop highest devotion.

In the second chapter I have dealt with the subject of "Love" in detail,–the various methods for developing love, the glory of true universal love, etc. Here I have also shown that faith is the primary requisite in the development of Bhakti. In this chapter, Viraha or separation of the devotee from his Lord, the sufferings the devotee will have to undergo before he gets God-vision and the various methods of Sadhana suited to achieve this end, have been clearly shown.

The third chapter contains some of the essentials in the path of devotion. The efficacy of practical Sadhana to the exclusion of all vain discussions have been pointed out here. The qualifications of a devotee, when and how devotion should be practised, how adversity or pain alone can give real

spiritual progress and a stimulus for the continuance of Sadhana, etc., have been shown in detail.

The science of Sankirtan, the benefits of Sankirtan and how to conduct Akhanda Kirtan have all been discussed with many instructions for Sankirtanists in the fourth chapter. The condition of the present day Sankirtan is also reviewed here briefly.

Chapter five gives the Bhakti Sutras of Sandilya with text, meaning and commentary. Chapter six and seven deal with songs and Sankirtan Dhvanis. The essence of devotion, Bhakti, the necessity for treading the spiritual path and other subjects have been dealt with, in the songs which will be much helpful to the aspirants because they can assimilate things in the form of songs very easily. The last chapter gives an account of the lives of some great devotees of the past like Prahlada, Dhruva and Narada, which will be a source of inspiration to all the aspirants. Stories and lives of great personages inspire a man to magnanimous heights, especially when the forces of Rajas overpower the aspirant. He will have extreme disgust, depression, delusion and doubts in his spiritual pursuit. He will begin to doubt the very existence of God. At such moments especially, if one goes through the lives of great men and knows how they conducted themselves in such circumstances, how they got over the various difficulties in the path, he will also have the same strength and will-power to get over all difficulties one by one and attain the goal of life, immortality or perennial joy.

I hope the present book will be a boon to the aspirants who wish to attain the goal of life by treading the path of devotion. All Sadhakas meet on the platform whichever path they may proceed. God or Brahman is the only reality. This world is a mere show. Realise this and become free in this very birth.

May you all tread the path of devotion and ever rest in the state of divine ecstasy and unalloyed bliss of Joy and happiness!

Sivananda

ANANDA KUTIR,
11th May, 1941.

FOREWORD

The Bhakti Sutras of Rishi Sandilya are as much useful to the aspirants in the path of devotion as the Bhakti Sutras of Narada. Each Sutra is a gem of incalculable value. There is depth of thought in every Sutra. These Sutras treat in a beautiful manner about the nature of devotion, culture of devotion, the forms of devotion, the Adhikaris or persons who are fit to tread the path of devotion, the object of devotion and the fruit of devotion.

There are 84 aphorisms in Narada Bhakti Sutras.Sandilya Bhakti Sutras contain 100 aphorisms. A Sutra is a terse short verse in Sanskrit which is pregnant with deep meaning. Great philosophical thoughts are condensed in a Sutra. A Sutra is a string on which are studded deep philosophical gems of thoughts. Rishis of India have all expressed their thoughts and spiritual experiences in the form of Sutras. Realised souls only with deep inner sight and clear intuition can write Sutras. We cannot understand these Sutras without the help of a lucid and exhaustive commentary.

Rishi Narada shows in his Sutras that there is difference between Jiva and God but Rishi Sandilya points out their oneness.

The Bhakti Sutras of Sandilya contain three chapters. Each chapter has two parts. In the first part of chapter I, Rishi Sandilya gives a definition of devotion and states that devotion is different from knowledge and that supreme devotion or Para Bhakti leads to the attainment of Oneness and Immortality. In the second part of chapter I, he discusses about the nature of Bhakti, Yoga and Jnana and their inter-relations. In the first part of chapter II, he points, out that knowledge is the internal means and the lower kind of devotion is the external means of Bhakti. In the second part, he gives an elaborate description of the secondary acts of devotion (Gauna Bhakti) which are the causes of supreme devotion (Mukhya or Para Bhakti). In the first part of the third chapter, he deals with the object of devotion. In the second part he points out that the Jiva or the individual soul realises the oneness with the Lord through supreme devotion and attains the final emancipation.

Should we not then devotedly express our keen sense of gratitude to our venerable Rishi Sandilya who has churned out the butter of Bhakti Sutras from the ocean of Bhakti literature for our assimilation and easy absorption?

Glory to our revered Rishi Sandilya who has shown us the easy way to develop Bhakti and attain the final emancipation. May his blessings be upon us all.

Sivananda

ANANDA KUTIR,
RISHIKESH,
4th July, 1941

PRAYER FOR DARSHAN

O All-merciful Lord! Time is fleeting. The senses are revolting. The mind is jumping. Maya is deluding. The three fires are burning. The five afflictions are tormenting. Friends are disturbing. Diseases are troubling. Heat of the summer is scorching. Flies, mosquitoes, bugs, scorpions, are teasing me in the extreme. The charms of the world are tempting. I can neither concentrate nor meditate. I cannot do anything in the spiritual path without Thy benign grace. O Lord! Thou art an ocean of mercy. Bless me. If I get a drop from that ocean of mercy, will it dry up?

O Adorable Lord! People proclaim that Thou art Dinabandhu, Dinanath, Kripanidhan, Kripa Sagar, Anatha Rakshak. Thou hast saved Ahalya, Draupadi, Prahlada, Dhruva, Gajendra, but in my case, Thou hast not done anything. I am still in pain, agony and darkness. I am crying for Thy grace and help. Where hast Thou gone, O absentee landlord of this world? O Self-effulgent Lord! The fish cannot live without water. The sun-flower cannot live without the Sun. The Pativrata cannot live without her husband. The mind cannot live without Prana. The flame of the lamp cannot live without oil. So also I cannot live without Thee, O Lord! Come, come, enthrone Thyself in my heart. Thou art the Prana of my Pranas. Thou art the Soul of my soul! Pray, bless me. Give me Darshan! I cannot bear the pain of separation any longer!

PRAYER OF A DEVOTEE

O Beauty! O Spiritual Imperishable, Inexhaustible Wealth! O Sweet Honey! O the Light of Heavens! O the Light of Devas or celestial beings, O my dear relative, Thou art my body, Thou art the inner heart of the body. Thou art the indweller of this body, Thou art the ovum, Thou art the germinal cell. Thou art the very life-element. Thou art the foetus that dwells in the womb of the mother. Thou art my eye. Thou art the black portion of the eye. Thou art the inner pupil that moves within the eye. Protect me. Let not evil touch me. Let me forget this world. Let me remember Thee always. Take me to Thy sweet bosom. Make me to dwell in Thee for ever.

O hidden Love that pervades all objects, O Power that sustains this vast universe, O Self-luminous Light that gives light to the Sun, the moon, the stars and the intellect, O Adorable Lord of this universe! O Deva of the Devas, O Lord of the lords, Thou art the womb of the Vedas. Thou art the Director or Governor of this universe. Thou art the life of my life, the Soul of my soul, Prana of Pranas, the Mind of my mind, the Eye of my eyes, the Ear of my ears. Thou art the beauty in flowers and landscapes. Thou art the charm in the face and skin. Thou art the Pranava of the Vedas. Thou art sweet silence. Thou art Peace that dwells in the heart, Thou art Eternal Bliss. Thou art knowledge, the destroyer of Avidya or ignorance. Thou art bestower of immortality, Thou art purity, the destroyer of cupid. Thou art the Supreme Light of lights that dispels the darkness of nescience, doubt and delusion. Thou art illimitable joy that removes pain, grief, sorrow and misery. Thou art Amritam or Nectar. Thou art Satyam, Jnanam, Anantam, Nitya, Anadi, Advaita, Akhanda, Paripoorna and Satchidananda.

O Thou Invisible One! O Adorable One! O Supreme! Thou permeatest and penetratest this vast universe from the unlimited space down to the tiny blade of grass at my feet. Thou art the basis for all these names and forms. Thou art the Apple of my eye, Prema of my heart, the very Life of my life, the very Soul of my soul, the Illuminator of my intellect and senses, the sweet Anahata music of my heart, and the substance of my physical, mental and causal frames.

I recognise Thee alone as the Mighty Ruler of this universe and the Inner Controller of my three bodies. I prostrate again and again before Thee, my Lord. Thou art my sole refuge. I trust Thee alone, O ocean of mercy and love. Elevate. Enlighten. Guide. Protect. Remove obstacles from my spiritual path. Remove the veil of ignorance. O Thou Jagadguru! I cannot

bear any longer, even for a second, the miseries of this body, this life and this Samsara. Give Darshan quickly. O Prabho! I am pining, I am melting. Listen, listen, listen to my fervent, Antarika prayer. Do not be cruel, my Lord. Thou art Dinabandhu. Thou art Adhama Uddharana. Thou art Patita Pavana (purifier of the fallen).

O magnificent Lord of love and compassion! O Fountain Head of bliss and knowledge! Thou art the eye of this world. Thou art the unseen seer, the unheard hearer, the unthought thinker and the unknown knower. Pray, deliver me from all temptations. Give me light, purity and knowledge.

GOD IS TRUTH

God is Truth. Truth is God. Speak the truth at any cost. Truth alone triumphs but not falsehood–*Satyameva Jayate Nanritam. A* truthful man is absolutely free from worries and anxieties. Truth is higher than the Vedas, Upanishads, Yajnas, etc. Do not utter lies to get position, respect, name, etc. Punish yourself by fasting and doing Japa of 50 Maalas if you tell a lie, with a repenting heart, making a resolve not to commit the same mistake again. Harmlessness, justice, equality, self-control, humility, unpretentiousness, rectitude, steadfastness, self-determination, self-sacrifice, forgiveness, fearlessness, cleanliness of life, straightforwardness, absence of wrath, renunciation, absence of crookedness, uncovetousness, modesty, absence of fickleness, endurance, charity, absence of jealousy, disinterested philanthropy, self-possession, fortitude, purity, vigour, absence of pride, are all forms of Truth.

Realise God by speaking truth and observing truth in thought, word and deed. If you speak the truth for twelve years you will have Vak-siddhi. Then there will be power in your speech. Whatever you say will come to pass.

Make a strong determination in the morning: “I will speak truth today.” Study the lives of Harischandra, Mahatma Gandhi and others. Keep daily spiritual diary and mark the number of lies you tell daily. Gradually the number of lies will be reduced. Eventually you will speak nothing but truth.

Penetrate more deeply into the kingdom of Truth. Aspire to realise Truth. Sacrifice your all for Truth. Speak the Truth. Die for Truth. Truth is life. Truth is existence. Truth is knowledge. Truth is bliss. Truth is silence. Truth is peace. Truth is light. Truth is love. Live to know the truth. Live to realise the Truth. May that Truth guide you in all your actions?

LIVE WISELY

Minus skin, minus dress, minus ornaments, woman is nothing. Just imagine for a moment that her skin is removed. You will have to stand by her side with a long stick to drive away crows and vultures. Physical beauty is superficial, illusory and fading. It is skin-deep only. Do not be deluded by external appearances. It is the jugglery of Maya. Go to the source Atman, the beauty of beauties, the everlasting beauty.

If your hairs become grey, that is the first warrant from lord Yama, the god of Death. You must get yourself ready to meet him. The wrinkles on the face and the bending of the body will remind you of the warrant. When the teeth fall and the eye-sight becomes dim, you must be fully prepared now to greet him. You will get three hiccups or final passing-breaths lying on the bed. When the last hiccup comes all your possessions will be taken away by your sons and partners. One will run after the savings bank pass-book and another will take hold of the cash chest, another your provident fund papers and insurance claim papers, another the ornaments that lie on your person and so on. Such is life on this earth plane. Why can you not see that the money is spent on charitable purposes such as dissemination of spiritual knowledge and the service of the poor and the sick, etc.? Friend! Try to attain immortality through devotion, meditation, purity, service, Japa, prayer and enquiry. All troubles and miseries will come to an end.

GLORY OF GOD'S NAME

1. The Name is your sole refuge in Kaliyuga
The Name is your prop, shelter and abode,
The Name is your spiritual preceptor,
The Name is your friend and companion.

2. The bestower of eternal bliss is the Name,
Name and Naami are inseparable,
God and His Name are one,
Name is the supreme Divine Nectar.

3. Name is Chintamani or Kalpa-Vriksha,
It gives Siddhi, Bhakti and Mukti,
It checks the mind-wandering,
And unites the aspirant with the Supreme.

4. Name is the crest-jewel that adorns a Bhakta.
It takes the aspirant to the Immortal Abode,
It kindles the inner spiritual flame,
It generates pure Divine Love.

5. It is the divine ladder that lifts you to the Lord,
It illumines the aspirants' path,
It eradicates, fear, sorrow and pain,
It washes the impurities of the mind.

6. Roll the beads with the Name,
Repeat the Name with no break,
Associate the Name with the breath,
And sing the Name with joy.

7. OM Namo Narayanaya, Om Namah Sivaya are the Names,
Sita Ram, Radheshyam, OM, are also the Names,
Select any Name you like best,
And repeat it with Bhava, faith and Prem.

8. Mira attained Krishna through the Name,
Tuka saw Vittal through the Name,
Prahlada made Narasimha incarnate through Name,
Glory to Name! Glory to Hari! Glory to Rama, Krishna!!

9. O Sweet Name, O Adorable Name, O Immortal Name,
Let me be intoxicated with the Name,
Let me remember the Name for ever,
Let me abide for ever in the Name.

10. O Omnipotent Name, O All-merciful Name,
Salutations to the Name, Adorations to the Name,
Let me have full Ruchi or taste for the Name,
Let me be established in the Name.

11. O Name! Thou art my father, mother and guide,
Thou art the dispeller of ignorance and sorrow,
Thou art the bestower of immortality and bliss,
I take refuge in Thee, protect me, O Name!

PEACE CHANT

1. Ayam Atma Santo,
This Atman is Peace:
So declare the Upanishads,
Om Santih Santih Santih.

2. Santam, Sivam, Advaitam,
Peaceful, auspicious, non-dual,
Is the Supreme Self or Brahman,
Om Santih Santih Santih.

3. Be still, and feel the mystic thrill
Behind the apparent chaos,
There is the ocean of Peace,
Om Santih Santih Santih.

4. Thou art an embodiment of Peace:
Feel this by silencing the thoughts,
Nothing can disturb thee now,
Om Santih Santih Santih

5. The mind is a bundle of Vasanas and Sankalpas;
The Vasanas are the fuel,
The Sankalpas are the fire,
Om Santih Santih Santih.

6. Withdraw the fuel of Vasanas,
The fire of Sankalpas will be extinguished:
Enjoy the Supreme Peace now,
Om Santih Santih Santih.

7. Dive deep in the ocean of Peace,
Bring out the priceless Atmic Pearl,
And cross the ocean of Samsara,
Om Santih Santih Santih.

THE SPIRITUAL PATH

1. Like the edge of a sharp razor,
Is the spiritual path.
Be on the alert,
When you tread the path.

2. Storms and tempests come on the way,
Be firm, be steady, be bold;
Keep your helm all right,
You will surely reach the shore.

3. That shore is the kingdom of Eternal Peace!
Thy immortal abode of Bliss and Nectar,
The city of deathlessness,
The non-dual domain of sages!

4. Stick to your ideal and goal,
Introspect, look within,
Do self-analysis, watch the thoughts,
Curb them by slow degrees.

5. Keep daily spiritual diary,
Correct the mistakes,
Review the actions of the day,
Compare it with that of the previous month.

6. Make fresh resolve daily,
“I will be patient to-day,
I will be a Brahmacharin.”
Thus go a step nearer the goal.

7. Be regular in your meditation,
March on steadily,
Reach the goal of life,
And shine as a dynamic Yogi.

Spiritual conquest

1. Subdue your little Self,

Keep the heart pure,

Build the bridge of love,

Enter the Kingdom of Peace.

2. Be moderate in food,

Control the senses,

Conquer your lower mind,

March on the path of Immortality

3. Learn to discriminate,

Learn to despise sensual objects,

Learn to give what you have,

Learn to look within.

4. Transmute sex-impulse into pure love,

Rise above sex and body,

Live in the Immortal Soul,

Attain everlasting life.

5. Get release from birth and death,

Abide in peace for ever and ever,

Now the mind cannot trouble you,

You can rest in Thy Svarupa.

6. Thou art free now,

Thou art perfect now,

Thou art illumined now,

Thou art a Jivanmukta now.

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BHAKTI AND SANKIRTAN

CHAPTER 1

BHAKTI SADHANA

1. God Exists

The insentient engine of a railway train cannot move without the intelligent driver. Even so, this insentient body-engine cannot move without the intelligent driver—God or Isvara. From the existence of the body, you can infer the existence of the hidden driver of the body-engine.

The existence of God (Brahman) or the Self is determined or indicated by the existence of the Upadhis or limiting adjuncts, viz., body, mind, Prana and the senses, because there must be self-consciousness behind their activities.

You always feel that, despite your possessions and all sorts of comforts, you are in want of something. There is no sense of fullness. If you add to yourself the all-full God only, you will have fullness.

When you do an evil action, you are afraid. Your conscience pricks you. This also proves that God exists and witnesses all your thoughts and actions.

To define Brahman is to deny Brahman. The only adequate description of Brahman is a series of negatives. That is the reason why the sage Yajnavalkya declares in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad about Brahman as `Neti, Neti'—not this, not this. This means that the residue left after sublating the names and forms is Brahman.

Brahman or the Self or the Immanent God cannot be demonstrated as He is beyond the reach of senses and mind but His existence can be inferred by certain empirical facts or common experiences in daily life. A certain lady had a fall from the third storey. Underneath there was a bed of sharp angular stones. She would have received serious injuries but she was miraculously saved. She herself expressed, “I felt the warm embrace by some invisible hands. Some mysterious power saved me.” Instances like this are not uncommon.

Sometimes you are in a peculiar dilemma or pressing pecuniary difficulty. Help comes to you in a mysterious manner. You get the money just in time. Every one of you might have experienced this. You exclaim at that moment in joy. “God's ways are mysterious indeed. I have got now full faith in God. Up to this time I had no faith in God.”

An advocate had no faith in God. He developed double pneumonia. His last breath stopped. His wife, son and relatives began to weep. But he had a mysterious experience. The messengers of Yama caught hold of him and brought him to the court of Lord Yama. Lord Yama said to his messengers: “This is not the man I wanted. You have brought a wrong person. Send him off.” He began to breathe after one hour. He actually experienced that he left the body, went to the court of Yama and again re-entered his physical body. This astonishing experience changed his entire nature. He developed intense faith in God and became a religious man. He is still living in the Uttar Pradesh.

Another advocate had a similar experience but there is some change in this case. He was also an atheist. He was brought by the messengers to the Durbar of Yama. This advocate asked Yama, “I have not finished my work in the physical plane. I have to do still more useful work. Kindly spare my life now." His boon was granted. He was struck with wonder by this strange experience. His nature also was entirely changed. He left the legal practice at once. He is devoting the remaining portion of his life in selfless service and meditation. He is still living in South India.

You find that even the world's best doctors fail to cure a dying king. You might have also heard of many instances where patients ailing from the worst type of diseases are cured miraculously where even the ablest doctors have declared the cese hopeless. This itself is a clear proof that there is the divine hand behind all cures.

Sometimes you cannot tolerate the company of persons. You wish to remain alone. You go to a solitary place—in a garden or on the banks of a river—and enjoy the inner peace. This gives the clue that you are, in

essence, an embodiment of peace, that you are alone and identical with Brahman.

Some people die when they are eighty years old; some die when they are in the womb; some die at twenty; some at forty. What is the cause for the variation? Who has fixed the span of life for all? This clearly proves that there is the theory of Karma, that there is one Omniscient Lord, who is the dispenser of the fruits of the actions of the Jivas, who fixes the span of life of the Jivas in accordance with their nature of Karma or actions, who knows the exact relation between Karmas and their fruits. As Karma is Jada or insentient, it certainly cannot dispense with the fruits of their actions.

Whether the owl accepts the presence of light or not, there is always light. Whether you accept the existence of God, or not, He always exists. He is ever shining in the three periods of time. He exists before you begin to search for Him. He is closer to you than your breath and nearer to you than your hands and feet.

Do you exist or not? That is my question. If you say 'No', I see before my eyes a huge figure with sinewy arms, a broad forehead and big eyes. If you say 'Yes', this gives the clue to the existence of God. The very question whether God exists or not clearly proves that God exists.

Whatever you see is God. Whatever you hear is God. Whatever you taste is God. Whatever is you smell is God. Whatever you feel is God. This is the manifested aspect. The physical body belongs to Virat. The astral body belongs to Hiranyagarbha. The causal body belongs to Isvara. Where is this 'I' now?

Emerson says, "A little consideration of what takes place around us everyday would show us that a higher law than that of our will regulates events; that our painful labours are very unnecessary and altogether fruitless; that only in our easy, simple, spontaneous action are we strong, and by contending ourselves with obedience we become divine. Belief and love will relieve us of a vast load of care. O my brothers! GOD EXISTS. There is a soul at the centre of nature and over the will of every man, so that none of us can wrong the universe. It has so infused its strong

enchantment into nature that we prosper when we accept its advice; and when we struggle to wound its creatures, our hands are glued to our sides, or they beat our own breasts. The whole course of things goes to teach us faith."

Can you tell me, friend, "Is there any one on the surface of the earth who is not afraid of death? Is there anyone who is not uttering the Name of the Lord when he is in serious difficulty, when his life is trembling in the balance or when he is in acute agony?" Why then, O sceptics, do you deny the existence of God? You yourself admit His existence when you are in trouble. On account of perverted intellect and worldly intoxication you have turned out as an atheist. Is this not a great folly? Think seriously. Give up arguing. Remember Him and attain Immortality and Eternal Peace right now.

2. Power of Prayer

Prayer has tremendous influence. I have many experiences. Gandhiji is a great votary of prayer. If the prayers is sincere and if it proceeds from the bottom of your heart (Antarika), it will at once melt the heart of the Lord. Krishna had to run bare-footed from Dwaraka on hearing the heart-felt prayer of Draupadi. You all know this. Lord Hari, The mighty ruler of this universe, apologised before Prahlada for coming to his rescue a little late. How merciful and loving is God!

Prayer can move mountains. Prayer can work miracles. Say even once from the bottom of your heart: "O Lord, I am Thine. Thy Will be done. Have mercy on me. I am Thy servant. Forgive. Guide. Protect. Enlighten. Thrahi. Prachodayat." Have a meek, receptive attitude of mind. Have Bhav in your heart. The prayer is at once heard and responded. Do this in the daily battle of life and realise yourself about the high efficacy of prayer. You must have strong Astika Buddhi (strong conviction in the existence of God).

Christians have different prayers for getting various gifts and bounties from God. Mohammedans and all religionists have daily prayers at sunrise, noon, sunset, just before retiring to bed and just before taking food. Prayer

is the beginning of Yoga. Prayer is the first important Anga (limb) of Yoga. Preliminary spiritual Sadhana or practice is prayer.

Even when the dacoit prays, God helps him. Pray to God for purity, devotion, light and knowledge. You will get these things. Get up in the early morning and repeat some prayer for getting mental and physical Brahmacharya. Pray in any way you like. Become as simple as a child. Open freely the chambers of your heart. Have no cunningness or crookedness. You will get everything. Sincere Bhaktas know pretty well about the high efficacy of prayers. Narada Muni is still praying. Nama Dev prayed and Vittala came out of the image to eat his offerings. Ekanath prayed, Lord Hari showed His form with four hands. Mira prayed, Lord Krishna served her as a servant. Damaji prayed, Lord Krishna played the part of a menial in paying his dues to the Bhadshah. What more you want? Pray fervently right now, from this very second. Do not delay, friend. That 'tomorrow' will never come.

3. Importance of Worship

Worship is the effort on the part of the Upasaka (he who Worships or does Upasana) to reach the proximity or presence of God or the Supreme Self. It consists of all those observances and practices—physical and mental—by which the aspirant or Jijnasu makes a steady progress in the realm of spirituality, and eventually realises in himself, in his own heart, the presence of Godhead. Upasya means that which is the object of Upasana, namely, God.

Eating, drinking, sleeping, fear and copulation, etc., are common in brutes and human beings; but that which makes one a real man or a God-man is Upasana. Upasana transmutes a man into blessed divinity. You will find in the Gita (XI-54): “But by devotion to Me alone, I may thus be perceived, Arjuna, and known and seen in essence, and entered, O Parantapa.”

He who leads a mere outward sensual life without doing any Upasana is an animal only though he wears outwardly the form of a human being.

Of all these things which are conducive to spiritual advancement, Adhyatmic uplift and the acquisition of Dharma, Upasana is one which is not only indispensably requisite but eminently beneficial to all classes and grades of people. It is easy too. Without faith in the giver, the Dharma (charity) does not attain fullness, and the giver will not get the maximum benefits. All gifts which are inspired by the fervour of Upasana and the love of God are really Sattvic. In Tapas (austerity), Yajna (sacrifice) and Kirtan also, the cumulative powers of faith, love of God and keen longing for divine illumination produce full Sattvic benefits or fruits.

Patanjali Maharshi emphasises in various places in his Raja Yoga Sutras on the importance of Upasana. For even a Raja Yogi, Upasana is necessary. He has his own Ishtam or guiding deity—Yogeshvara Krishna' or Lord Siva. Self-surrender to God is an Anga (limb) of Raja Niyama and Kriya Yoga. Patanjali says, “One can enter into Samadhi through Upasana."

4. Pratima or Symbol

Whilst all things may be the object of worship, choice is naturally made of these objects which, by reason of their effect on the mind, are more fitted for it. An image or one of the usual emblems is likely to raise in the mind of the worshipper the thought of a Devata. Saligram stone easily induces concentration of mind. Everybody has got predilection for a particular symbol,emblem or image. These are all personal inclinations in the worshipper due to his belief in their special efficacy for him. Psychologically all this means that a particular mind finds that it works best in the direction desired by means of particular instruments or emblems or images.

To the worshipper who believes the symbol, any kind of image is the body of the Lord under the form of stone, clay, brass, picture, Saligram, etc. Such worship can never be idolatry. All matter is a manifestation of God. God is present in everything which exists. Everything is an object of worship for all is a manifestation of God who is therein worshipped. The very act of worship implies that the object of worship is superior and

conscious. This way of looking at things must be attained by the devotee. The untutored mind must be trained to view things in the above manner.

The vast bulk of humanity is either of impure or weak mind. Therefore the object of worship must be pure for these people. The objects that are capable of exciting lust and dislike must be avoided. But a higher advanced Sadhaka, who has a pure mind and who sees the divine presence everywhere and in everything, can worship any kind of object. Some hypocrites seek to gratify their desires under cover of worship.

5. Bhajan

Bhajan is the worship of God. God is Truth. God is Love. God is Light. God is Peace. God, Love, Peace, Truth, Knowledge, Bliss and Existence are synonymous terms only. I will again put it in this way. That secondless Supreme Being, who resides in the inner chambers of your heart as Antaryami or Inner Ruler who has no beginning, middle and end, who is all-pervading, who is unchanging, who exists in the past, present and future, who is Svayambhu (self-existent), who is Svatantra (independent) and who is self-luminous is God.

Bhajan is meditation on God. Bhajan is Upasana. In short, all contrivances or methods that are calculated to bring the devotee face to face with God are Bhajan. Japa (repetition of His Name). Sankirtan (singing His Name either alone or with a party), prayer, etc., constitute Bhajan.

Life without Bhajan of some sort or other is absolutely useless, my dear friends. Life without worship is dreary and cheerless. It is a mere burden only on this earth. Just as zero is nothing without one in the beginning, so also this life is practically nothing without Bhajan, although you possess in abundance all the objects of this world. This world is a long dream, Anitya-full of pains and miseries. The only Sara-vastu is God.

There are rituals for beginners in the path of devotion. When the devotee advances, when his mind is totally absorbed in his object of Bhajan or Ishta-Devata, there is no use of waving of lights, offering sandal paste, ringing bells, etc. The whole Visva is Brindavan for him. His heart is Sevakunj, where Krishna delights with Radha. What a glorious state of devotion it is! The devotee gets Para-Bhakti or supreme devotion. All rituals drop out themselves for such an exalted Bhakta. But rituals are of great

help for beginners in developing Bhakti. They should not be ignored on any score.

All religionists do their own Bhajan in their own way. The goal is the same; but the paths are different. Essentials are the same in all religions but non-essentials are different. Ignorant, petty-minded people fight over non-essentials and neglect the very core or essence of religion. Why do you count the leaves in vain? Eat the mangoes directly. Every religion demands from the aspirant purity, good character, mercy towards creatures, brotherly love, speaking truth and attaining God-consciousness.

Even trees, brooks, rivers, ocean, the gentle breeze, suns Moon and stars, birds, etc., are doing Bhajan silently. They are repeating His Name. Rivers repeat Bhum. Bhum, Bhum. Breeze utters OM OM OM. Waves of the ocean repeat Hari Om or Soham. The sound of Hari Om comes out of the mouth of every bird. Even railway trains, engines of factories repeat Hari Om Tat Sat. Mark this very carefully.

The objects of doing worship or Bhajan are to attain infinite, eternal peace, immortality, and freedom Samsaric wheel of birth and death with its concomitant evils, viz., disease, old age, sins and miseries of all sorts. There is not an iota of happiness in this world and its objects. It is all Bhrantisukha or imaginary, illusory, nerve-irritation. The inner Antahkarana (mind) is a blazing furnace. Bhajan destroys the three kinds of Taapa-Adhyatmic, Adhibhautic and Adidaivic; eradicates the Granthis (knots) of ignorance and annihilates the five afflictions and the three Doshas of the mind. It takes the devotee to the Paramdham. The Bhakta enjoys all divinę Aisvarya along with God. He drinks the nectar of immortality. He enjoys Salokya, Sameepya, Sarupya and Sayujya Mukti.

Now, dear friends, stand up. Gird up the loins. Be sincere and true. Sing His Name always: Hari Om, Sita Ram or Radheshyam. Remember His Name. Feel His presence everywhere, in every face. Realise Him. That is your highest duty. Meditate on Him. Purify your heart by serving humanity with Nishkamya Bhava and with Narayana Bhava. Love all. Be kind to all. Control the revolting Indriyas. Speak the Truth. Develop humility, Kshama, patience, the spirit of service and self-sacrifice. Preserve Veerya. Lord is quite close to you in your heart. He is ever ready to embrace you. Live in Him. Merge within. Dive deep. Enjoy the fruit of your Bhajan now. I will leave you there. Drink deep. Cling to His Name with leech-like tenacity. Do Kirtan always. Sing once more with Prem and Bhava opening the chambers of your heart:

"Sunaja Sunaja Sunaja Krishna,

Tu Geetavala Jnana Sunaja Krishna;

Bol Hari Bol Hari, Hari Hari Bol,

Kesava, Madhava, Govinda Bol."

This is the essence of Bhajan. These are the fruits of Bhajan. Become a Yogi, a Munindra or a Jnani or a Bhagavata. May the divine splendour shine in your face forever! May the divine harmony fill your heart and the whole being!

6. Upasana

Upasana means worship. It literally means 'sitting near' God. Upasana is approaching the chosen ideal or object of worship by meditating on it in accordance with the teachings of the Sastras and the Guru and dwelling steadily in the current of that one thought, like a thread of oil poured from one vessel to another (Tailadharavat).

Upasana is of two kinds, viz., Pratika Upasana and Ahamgraha Upasana. "Pratika' means a symbol. Pratika Upasana is Saguna Upasana. Ahamgraha Upasana is Nirguna Upasana or meditation on the formless and attributeless Akshara or transcendental Brahman. Meditation on idols, Saligram, pictures of Lord Rama, Lord Krishna, Lord Siva, Gayatri Devi is Pratika Upasana. The blue expansive sky, all-pervading ether, all-pervading light of the sun, etc., are also 'Pratikas' for abstract meditation. Saguna Upasana is concrete meditation. Nirguna Upasana is abstract meditation.

Hearing of the Lilas of the Lord, Kirtan or singing His Names, constant remembrance of the Lord (Smarana), service of His feet, offering flowers, prostration, prayer, chanting of Mantra, self-surrender, service of Bhagavatas, service of humanity and country with Narayana Bhava, etc., constitute Saguna Upasana.

Chanting of Om with Atma Bhava, service of humanity and country with Atma Bhava, mental Japa of Om with Atma or Brahma Bhava, meditation on Soham or Sivoham or on the Mahavakyas such as 'Aham Brahma Asmi' or 'Tat Tvam Asi' after sublating the illusory vehicles through 'Neti, Neti' doctrine, constitute Ahamgraha Upasana or Nirguna Upasana.

Upasana changes the mental substance, destroys Rajas and Tamas and fills the mind with Sattva or purity. Upasana destroys Vasanas, Trishnas, egoism, lust, hatred, anger, etc. Upasana turns the mind inward and induces Antarmukha Vritti, eventually brings the devotee face to face with the Lord, frees the devotee from the wheel of births and deaths and confers on him immortality and freedom

The mind becomes that on which it meditates in accordance with the analogy of the wasp and the caterpillar (Bhramara-keeta Nyaya). Just as you think, so you become. This is the immutable psychological law. There is a mysterious or inscrutable power in Upasana (Achintya Shakti) which makes the meditator and the meditated identical.

Saguna Upasana is Bhakti Yoga or the Yoga of devotion. Nirguna Upasana is Jnana Yoga or the Yoga of knowledge. The Yoga of devotion is much easier than the Jnana Yoga. In Bhakti Yoga the devotee establishes a near and dear relationship with the Lord. He cultivates slowly any one of the five Bhavas according to his temperament, taste and capacity. The five Bhavas are: Santa Bhava, Dasya Bhava (master and servant), Sakhya Bhava (friendship with the Lord), Vatsalya Bhava (Pita Putra Sambandha—father and son relationship) and Madhurya Bhava (lover and the beloved). The last Bhava is the highest culmination of Bhakti. It is merging or absorption in the Lord. The devotee adores the Lord. He constantly remembers Him (Smarana). He sings His Name (Kirtan). He speaks of His glories. He repeats His Name. He chants His Mantra. He prays and prostrates. He hears His Lilas. He does total, ungrudging, unconditional surrender, obtains His grace, holds communion with Him and gets absorbed in Him eventually.

In Jnana Yoga or the path of Vedanta, the aspirant acquires the four means of liberation, viz., (1) Viveka (discrimination), (2) Vairagya (indifference to sensual enjoyments herein and hereafter), (3) Shat-sampat (six virtues) viz., (i) Sama (tranquillity of mind), (ii) Dama (restraint of the Indriyas), (iii) Uparati (renunciation), (iv) Titiksha (power of endurance), (v) Sraddha (faith in the words of the Guru or spiritual preceptor and in the Srutis (Upanishads), (vi) Samadhana (balance of mind or one-pointedness of mind), and (4) Mumukshutva (keen longing for liberation or deliverance from the round of births and deaths). Then he approaches a Brahmasrotriya. Brahmanishtha Guru who has realised the Supreme Self and hears the Srutis from him. Then he reflects and meditates on the Self

or Atman and attains eventually Atma-Sakshatkara or Brahmanubhava (direct realisation of the Self)

Saguna Brahman is Saupadhika (with Upadhi— limiting adjunct). Maya is His Upadhi or Karana Sarira. Nirguna Brahman is Nirupadhika (without any limiting adjunct). He is free from Maya. Saguna Brahman is Omniscient, Omnipotent. Omnipresent. Saguna Brahman is Isvara. Nirguna Brahman assumes the form of Saguna Brahman for His sporting (Lila) and for the pious worship of devotees. Nirguna Brahman represents the Sun. Saguna Brahman represents the rays of the Sun. Just as water exists in the unmanifested state in the form of vapour, so also the Nirguna Brahman exists in an unmanifested state. Vapour, water and ice, are one. So also Saguna Brahman and Nirguna Brahman are one.

The Akshara Brahman is the Unmanifested (Avyakta). He is incomprehensible to the senses (Akarnagochara). He is destitute of all Upadhis or limiting adjuncts. That which is visible to the senses (Karnagochara) is called Vyakta or the manifested. The unmanifested transcendental Brahman is beyond all limitations. He is beyond time, space and causation. He is eternal and indefinable. He is beyond all limitations. He is beyond the reach of speech and mind (Avangmanogochara). He cannot be actually shown (Anirdeshya). He cannot be defined, because He is beyond the reach of words or speech (Asabdagochara, Avachya).

Why the Akshara Brahman cannot be defined? Because He is unmanifested. He has not got the four Dharmas, viz., .. (caste such as Brahmin, etc.), Guna (attribute such a white, etc.), Kriya (action such as he who reads, he who want etc.), and Sambandha (relationship such as Janakanya Sambhandha like father and son). He is unthinkable, because He is the Unmanifest (Avyakta Achintya). Whatever is visible to the senses can be thought of by the mind also. That which can be grasped by the organs of knowledge (Jnana Indriyas) can be thought of by the mind also (Yat hi karnagocharam tat manasa api chintyam).

Worshippers of Saguna (the qualified) and Nirguna Brahman (the unqualified) reach the same goal. But the latter path is very hard, because the aspirant has to give up attachment to the body (Dehabhimana) from the very beginning of his spiritual practice. The Akshara or the Imperishable is very hard for those who are attached to their bodies to reach. Further it is extremely difficult to fix the mind on the formless and attributeless

Brahman. Contemplation on the Akshara or Nirguna Brahman demands a very sharp, one-pointed and subtle intellect.

The Sruti says:

"Yesha sarveshu bhuteshu gudhatma na prakasate,

Drishyate tvagryaya budhaya sukshmaya sukshmadarshibhi."

This Atman is hidden in all beings and does not shine forth, but it is seen by subtle seers through their sharp and subtle intellect.

He who realises the Nirguna Brahman attains eternal bliss or Self-realisation or Kaivalya Moksha which is preceded by the destruction of Avidya with its effects (Karva-prapancha-sahita Avidya Nivritti-purvaka Nirvisesha Parmananda Brahma Prapti). He who realises Saguna Brahman goes to Brahmaloka and enjoys all the Aisvarva of the Lord. He then gets initiation into the mysteries of Kaivalva

Gurupadesha) from Hiranyagarbha and without any effort, without the practice of Sravana, Manana and Nididhyasana attains, through the grace of the Lord, Kaivalya Moksha, the same state attained by Vedantins. Through the knowledge of the self (Tattva Jnana), Avidya with its effects (Karya Sahita Avidya) is destroyed in the case of the Saguna Upasakas also.

May you all attain the goal of life either through "Pratika" or "Ahamgraha" Upasana according to your temperament, Samskaras, taste, capacity, disposition or attitude in this very birth!

7. Puja

Puja is the common term for ritual worship of which there are numerous synonyms such as Archana, Vandana, Bhajana, etc., though some of these stress certain aspects of it. The object of worship is the Ishta Devata or guiding deity or the particular form of the Deity whom the devotee worships such as Vishnu as such or in His forms as Rama and Krishna in the case of Vaishnavites, Siva in the eight forms in the case of Saivites, Devi in the case of Saktas.

An object is used in the outer Puja such as an image (Pratima), a picture or an emblem such as Saligram in the case of Vishnu worship or Linga in the case of worship of Siva.

The materials used or acts done in Puja or worship of God are known as Upachara. They are sixteen in number (Shodasopachara): 1. Asana (offering seat for the image); 2. Svagata (welcoming the Devata); 3. Padya (water for washing the feet); 4. Arghya (water offering made in the vessel); 5. Achamana (water for sipping); 6. Madhuparka (honey, ghee, milk and curd); 7. Snana (water for bathing); 8. Vastra (cloth or garment); 9. Abhushana (jewels); 10. Gandha (perfume); 11. Pushpa (flowers); 12. Dhupa (incense); 13. Dipa (lights); 14. Naivedya (food); 15. Tambulam (betels, nuts, etc.); and 16. Vandana or Namaskara (prayer).

8. Manasika Puja

Manasika Puja is more powerful than external Puja with flowers, etc. Arjuna thought that Bhima was not doing any kind of worship. He was proud of his external worship to Lord Siva. He offered Bael leaves. But Bhima offered to Lord Siva mentally the Bael leaves of all the Bael trees of the whole world.

He was doing Manasika Puja of Lord Siva. The attendants of Lord Siva were not able to remove the Bael leaves offered by Bhima from the head of Lord Siva. Arjuna once saw a large band of people carrying baskets of Bael leaves. He thought within himself that these leaves must be those offered by him to Lord Siva and questioned them thus, "Brothers, where from do you carry these Bael leaves?" They replied, "O Arjuna, these leaves are offered to our Lord Siva by Bhima through his Manasic Puja." Arjuna was struck with wonder. He came to know that Manasic Puja was more powerful than the external worship and that Bhima was a better devotee than him. His pride was destroyed. He became very humble.

Manasic Puja can be done by advanced students. Beginners should certainly do worship with flowers, sandal paste, incense, etc. You will have more concentration when you do Manasic Puja. Mentally enthrone the Lord on the Simhasana set with diamonds, pearls, emeralds, etc. Offer Him a seat. Apply sandal paste to His forehead and body. Offer Arghya, Maduparka and various sorts of flowers, clothes, etc. Burn incense. Wave lights. Burn camphor. Offer various kinds of fruits, sweetmeats and Maha Naivedyam. Offer to the Lord the fruits of the whole world. Do not be

miserly even in Manasic Puja. In Manasic Puja one man offered only one stale plantain fruit and a handful of gram. A miserable miserly man! Even in Manasic Puja he cannot be very generous and liberal. This world abounds with such deplorable misers!

In the end mentally repeat:

Kayena vacha manasendriyairva

Buddhyatmana vaa prakritaisvabhavat;

Karomi yadyat sakalam parasmai

Narayanayeti samarpayami.

"Whatever action I do with the body, by speech, by the mind, by the senses, by the intellect or by my own nature, I offer all of them to the Supreme Lord Narayana." Also say "Om Tat

Sat Brahmarpanamastu." This will purify your heart and remove the taint of expectation of reward.

9. Four Kinds of Bhavas

There are four kinds of worship, corresponding to four different states and dispositions of the Sadhaka himself. The realisation that the Supreme Spirit (Paramatma) and the individual spirit (Jivatma) are one, that everything is Brahman and that nothing but the Brahman, everlasting being is the highest state of Brahma Bhava. Constant meditation with Yoga-processes upon the Devata in the heart is the lower form (Dhyana Bhava). Lower still is that Bhava of which Japa (recitation of Mantra) and hymns of praise are the expression and lowest of all is external worship (Bahya Pooja).

Pooja Bhava is that which arises out of the dualistic notions of worshipper and worshipped, the servant and the Lord, a dualism which necessarily exists in greater or lesser degree until monistic experience is attained. He who realises Advaita Tattva knows that all is Brahman. For him there is neither worshipper nor worshipped, neither Yoga nor Puja nor Dharma, Dhyana, Japa, Vrata or other rituals. For he is a Siddha (perfect sage in its fullest sense), that is, he has attained Siddhi (perfection) which is the aim of Sadhana.

10. Yearn for God-vision

Bhakti should be of a Nishkama type. It should be Avyabhicharini also. It should be continuous like Tailadhara (flow of oil). The aspirant should observe right conduct (Sadachara). He should be very serious and earnest in his devotional practices. Then only realisation of God will come very quickly.

If you do not want anything from God save devotion and Prem, it is Nishkama Bhakti or Ahaituka Bhakti and Ragatmika Bhakti or Mushkama Bhakti ((primary, spontaneous, motiveless devotion) Prahlada had this kind of Bhakti. If you entertain devotion for getting wealth, son or the removal of disease, it is Sakama Bhakti or Hetuka Bhakti or Gauna Bhakti (secondary, devotion with motive).

If the devotee loves God sometimes, and his wife, son, money, house, cattle and property also at other times, it is Vyabhicharini Bhakti. The love is divided. A small portion of the mind is given to God. The remaining portion is given to family and possession.

If you remove a fish out of water and place it on the shore, it will flutter with intense agony. It will be thirsting for re-entry into the water. If you keep a boy in the cold water of the Ganga for a short time, he will be greatly agitated. He will shriek and yell out. He will be eager to come out of the water. When the house of a man has caught fire, the owner of the house runs immediately to the municipal office to get the fire-brigade for extinguishing the fire. He takes immediate steps. If the aspirant has the same thirsting, the same feeling, the same earnestness or seriousness for realising God, as the fish has for getting back into the water, as the boy has for getting out of the water, as the man whose house is on fire has for getting the fire-brigade, he will have realisation of God this very second. There is no doubt of this. O aspirants, be very serious and earnest in your devotional practices. Run now to the Lotus Feet of the Lord. Those people, who are not serious and earnest about their devotional practices, have lost this world on this end and God on the other end. They are hanging in the air with heads downwards like Trisanku. Miserable specimens! Pitiable is their lot.

Keep a spiritual diary. Note down in the diary when you become angry towards others and when you hurt the feelings of others. This is very, very

important. If you exhibit anger or hurt others, impose self-punishment on yourself. Give up meals at night. Do Japa 50 Maalas more. Write in the diary: “I have gotten to see God in man two times this day.” If you proceed in this way for one or two years, you will doubtless realise remarkable Santi (peace), wonderful spiritual progress and strong Will-power. Many kinds of miseries, troubles and mental torments will come to an end. Devotion will develop. You will evolve rapidly. You will be a changed man. You will be a veritable God on earth. Will you practise this, dear friends, from this very day on which you read these lines? Turn over the pages of the diary once a week. If you commit twenty mistakes daily, you will commit five only in a day after six months, if you keep a diary. A good time will come and you will not commit even a single mistake in a day. Benjamin Franklin kept this kind of diary.

Sit not idly craving God to help you, but be up and doing, as God helps those who help themselves. From the life of Prahlada learn the method to love God and God alone. Love God as Prahlada did. Do the best you can and leave the rest to God. This is the highest form of worship. Follow the footsteps of Prahlada. By the grace of the Lord, you will attain joy, peace, · bliss, perfection and immortality.

11. Self-surrender

Self-surrender is Saranagati or Atma-Nivedan. This is one of the nine modes of Bhakti. The Bhakti starts with Sravan or hearing the Lilas and Gunas of the Lord and slowly ascends the different rungs in the ladder of Bhakti Yoga and ultimately reaches the highest rung. Atma-Nivedan. The will of the devotee becomes one with the cosmic Will. The devotee becomes one with the Lord and enjoys all Divine Aisvarya of the Lord. Eight Siddhis and nine Riddhis roll under his feet. They stand with folded hands to obey implicitly the commands of the devotee. The devotee feels and sees Ram or Shyam in every hair follicle of his body in every atom and molecule. This state is Achintya (unthinkable) and Anirdeshya (indescribable). Lord Rama directly speaks and works now through the different organs of His Bhakta, as his egoism is totally destroyed. The obstacles that stand in the way of self-surrender are desires and egoism. The self-surrender must be totally unreserved, ungrudging and unconditioned. Some times the devotee keeps certain desires for his own gratification. That is the reason why he is not able to make perfect self-surrender and have Darshan of his Ishtam (tutelary deity). The egoism is

very stiff and obstinate. It is like hard granite. It has to be split asunder through constant hammering with the chisel of Bhakti. Even the very hard diamond is pierced through by another material and a slender wire is passed through the hole in the diamond when a necklace is made. Even so this hard Antahkarana or heart must be pierced through by self-surrender and the slender thread of Bhakti must be passed through the hole in the heart. Then only Bhagavan Ramachandra will take seat in the heart of His devotee.

The devotee even expects God to do the self-surrender for himself. This is mere foolishness only. He will have to do the self-surrender himself. Remember this point well.

Tamas or inertia is mistaken for self-surrender. In Patanjali Yoga Sutras there is an aphorism, “Isvarapranidhanadva.” Samadhi can be attained by surrendering the little self and the fruits of one's actions at the feet of the Lord. Self-surrender is one of the three limbs of Kriya Yoga—“Tapas Svadhyaya Isvara Pranidhanani Kriyayoga—austerity, study of books, and self-surrender, constitute Kriya Yoga.” Then again self-surrender is one of the five items in Niyama. The Kriya Yoga destroys the five Kleshas (afflictions) and prepares the mind for union with the Lord.

Lord Krishna says in the Gita, “Abandoning all duties, come to Me alone for shelter; sorrow not, I will liberate thee From all sins.” This is a powerful Saranagati Mantra that will help the devotee in effecting his self-surrender if he keeps up Bhava of this Sloka constantly before his mind.

The corresponds to the Saranagati Mantra “Sri Ramah saranam mama I surrender myself to Sri Rama” of Bhaktas of “Sri Rama. “Shri Krishnah saranam mama—I surrender myself to Shri Krishna” of Bhaktas of Lord Krishna. “Sreeman Narayana charanau saranam prapadye -I surrender my self to Lord Narayana” of Bhaktas of Lord Hari. Those who repeat the above Mantras with Bhava will get the grace of the Lord soon. They will be able to accomplish perfect self-surrender. “Sishvasteham shadhi mam tvam prapannam—I am Thy disciple, suppliant to Thee, teach me.” This is also a Saranagati Mantra. If you repeat this with sincerity and Bhava, Lord Krishna's Grace will descend upon you.

Repetition of the following formulae also will help you to make perfect self-surrender:—“I am Thine, my Lord, all are Thine. Thy will be done.” Even if

you say once from the core of your heart, from the central, inner being, with one-pointed devotion, with 100% of your mind or 16 Annas of mind “I am Thine, my Lord” the gulf that separates you from God will be bridged over at once. The mind, Chitta, heart, intellect and soul should all combine harmoniously affecting the surrender. Then only the self-surrender will be true, complete and perfect. If the mind says, “I am Thine my Lord,” if the Buddhi says, “I am Mr. so and so, I am a M.L.C., I know everything, I am a powerful judge,” if the Chitta says "I must have the Siddhi to get whatever I want," and if the soul says, "I am a great devotee," you are only a hypocrite. You have not made any kind of self-surrender. Beware of moral and spiritual pride. Maya assumes various subtle forms. Moral and spiritual pride of aspirants are more dangerous than the ordinary pride of wealth, power and position of worldly-minded persons.

12. Stages in Bhakti

Sat-Sanga, Svadhyaya

I

Admiration

I

Sraddha (faith)

I

Devotion (Sadhana Bhakti)

I

Nishtha (devoutness)

I

Ruchi (taste)

I

Rati (intense attachment)

I

Sthayi Bhava (steadiness)

I

Maha Bhava (Prem Maya)

Through Satsanga and Svadhyaya (study of devotional books) comes admiration for the Lord; from admiration comes Sraddha (faith); from Sraddha comes devotion to the Lord. Then the devotee practises Sadhana Bhakti, viz., Japa, Smarana and Kirtan. He burns the sins and obstacles to attain his devotion by the above practice. From Sadhana Bhakti he develops Nishta (devoutness); from Nishta comes Ruchi or taste for hearing and chanting the Names and glories of the Lord. Then comes Rati (intense attachment). Rati softens the heart. When Rati is intensified it is called Sthayi Bhava (steadiness or permanent form of Bhakti Rasa). When Sthayi Bhava is intensified, it is called Maha Bhava or Prema Maya. Now the devotee drinks the Prema Rasa and lives in the Lord. Such a devotee is dead to the world and its attractions. He remains like one unconcerned in the activities of his body even. He reaches the state of Jivanmukti or liberation while living.

Chapter II

PHILOSOPHY OF LOVE

1. What Is Love?

Love is mysterious divine glue that unites the hearts of all. It is divine magical healing balm of a very high potency. A life without faith, love and devotion is a dreary waste. It is real death. Love is Divine. Love is the greatest force on earth. It is irresistible. It is love alone that can really conquer the heart of a man. Love subdues an enemy. Love can tame wild animals. Its power is infinite. Its depth is unfathomable. Its nature is ineffable. Its glory is indescribable.

We have to develop gradually universal love through selfless service, Satsanga with Mahatmas, prayer, recitation of Guru-mantra, etc. When the heart is contracted through selfishness in the beginning, man loves only his wife, children, a few friends and relatives. As he evolves, he loves the people of his own district, then the people of his own province. Later on he develops love for men of his own country. Eventually, he begins to love other people of different countries. In the long run he begins to love all. He develops universal love. All the barriers are broken asunder; heart has expanded to infinitum.

It is easy to talk of universal love. When you want to put it into actual practice, it becomes extremely difficult. Petty-mindedness of all sorts stands in the way. Old, wrong Samskaras which you have created by your wrong thinking in the past, act as stumbling blocks. Through iron determination, strong will, patience, perseverance, and Vichara (right enquiry), you can conquer all obstacles quite easily. The grace of the Lord will descend upon you if you are sincere, my dear friends.

Universal love terminates in Advaitic unity of oneness or Upanishadic consciousness of seers and sages. Pure love is a great leveler. And It brings equality and cosmic vision. Mira, Gouranga, Tukaram, Ramdas, hafiz, Kabir have all tasted this universal love. in the one embrace of universal love all differences and petty illusory distinctions melt away. Love alone reigns supreme.

There is no virtue higher than love, there is no treasure higher than love, there is no knowledge higher than love, there is no Dharma higher than

love, there is no religion higher than love because Love is Truth. Love is God. This world has come out of Love, this world exists in Love and this world ultimately dissolves in Love. God is an embodiment of Love. in every inch of His creation you can verily understand His love.

Live in love. Breathe in love. Sing in love. Eat in love. Drink in love. Talk in love. Pray in love. Meditate in love. Think in love. Move in love. Die in love. Bathe and plunge in the sacred ocean of love. Imbibe the honey of love and become an embodiment of love.

In the beginning stage a Bhakta worships God. He dislikes other kinks of Bhaktas who worship other Devatas. Sakama Bhakti is one where the Bhakta worships God for getting riches or son or for the removal of suffering from diseases. Sakama Bhakti will eventually terminate in Nishkama Bhakti. Even Dhruva had only Sakama Bhakti in the beginning. When he had Darshan of Lord Hari, all his desires vanished. He developed Para Bhakti. Para Bhakti is a fire that burns all mundane desires. It was only Prahlada who had pure Nishkama Bhakti from his very boyhood. Vyabhicharini Bhakti is one in which the devotee worships or loves God for sometimes and then his wife, children and property for some time. To love God and God alone for ever and ever is Avyabhicharini Bhakti. Prahalada in the advanced stage of devotion meditated on his own Self as Lord Hari. This is Abheda Bhakti.

Satsanga or association with Sadhus and Bhaktas helps a long way in developing universal love. In the company of saints' conversation on God take place. These are very pleasing to the heart and ears. The deliverance of Jagai and Madhai and dacoit Ratnakar from a most sinful life they were leading, affords striking examples of what the company of Sadhus can do.

Stand up dear friends. Struggle hard. Plod on. Annihilate egoism, selfishness, pride and hatred. Serve. Love. Give. Remember the triplet "Datta-Daya-Dama"-"Give-have Mercy-control the Indriyas." Practise this also. Do not expect even gratitude, approbation, admiration for the services that you render. Consecrate everything at the Lotus Feet of the Lord. Have the motto."Love for love's sake. Work for work's sake."

Become a true Vaishnavite, humbler than the blade of grass that is trodden under your feet, more patient than the tree, not caring for hounor from other, yet honouring all, singing always the Name of Hari and serving

humanity-Lord in manifestation. You will soon develop universal love of Prem. You will have Darshan of Hari. I assure you. This alone will give you immortality and eternal peace.

2. Gospel of Love

The path of love is the right royal road that leads to the abode of immortality and eternal bliss-Parama Dhama, where time cannot exercise its destructive power, where Maya cannot show her face. It is the clear and open way to God. Prema frees the devotee from the round of births and deaths. Beatitude is love's handmaid. Love is the highest attainment.

The devotee has no desire whatsoever for self enjoyment. His one keen longing is to love the Lord for the sake of love and to serve Him for His pleasure's sake. When a devotee develops such a love, the Lord becomes his slave.

Pure, unselfish love is Prema or devotion to the Lord. Pure love is a rare commodity. It has to be gradually cultivated. It endures or lasts for ever. There cannot be any rupture or friction or weary face or frowning here. There is no decline or waning. It always increases like the waxing moon or the Ganga in the rainy season.

Pure love alone can remove all barriers that separate man from man. Pure love alone can eradicate all sorts of unreasonable dislikes and prejudices, intolerance and hatred. Pure love alone can unite a Jew and a Christian, a Hindu and a Muslim, a Catholic and a Protestant, a Brahmin and a non-Brahmin, a Vaishnavite and a Saivite, a Sanatanist and a Arya Samajist, a Sakta and a Ramanandi, an Englishman and an Italian, a Chinese and a Japanese, a Sannyasi and a Vairagi, on a common platform and the care of their hearts also.

Even best friends in the world fight amongst themselves. Even husbands and wives who are united for a long time quarrel among themselves. Even fathers and sons are at loggerheads. But there can never be any break of continuity in pure love. Pure love is Divine. Pure love is God. God is pure love. In pure love there can never be any tinge or microscopical trace of selfishness. That is the reason why it endures for ever. Love is a great purifier of mind.

Love or Prema is a mighty power. It indeed exercises a wonderful power over the beings that come under its masterful influence. Love is a great leveler. All differences between the two vanish. The lover and the beloved are placed in the same level. Pure, unselfish love can turn God into human and human into God. There is no Power on earth greater than love. Niyamas or rules are broken by power of love.

Love is the immediate way to Truth or the kingdom of God or the vast domain of perennial peace and joy. it is the life-principle of creation. it is the highest expression or sould forece. it is the sum-total of all the duties of religion. it is the magic wand in the hand of a devotee with which he conquers the whole world. It has been the driving force behind Mira, Radha, Takaram. Tulasidas, Gouranga, Jesus and God intoxicated Sufis-Mansoor and Shams Tabriez.

St. John says: "He that loveth his brother abideth in the Light. Let us not move in word, neither with the tongue, but in deed and Truth. If we love one another, God abideth in us and His love is perfected in us. He that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him. Love is thus the clear and open way to God, so simple and so perfect that many fail to find it, seeking instead some more elaborate road."

Love brings extreme satisfaction. When the devotee comes face to face with the Lord, his heart is filled with supreme bliss and joy. All his desires are gratified. Hear the words of Dhruva. He says: "Just as a man looking for a piece of glass, hits upon a sparkling gem, so also, O Lord, have I by practising Tapas in quest of a royal throne attained Thee. I am perfectly satisfied. I do not want any boon."

When your life's journey is about to come to an end, you will get the company of a Sadhu or a Mahatma. In his company you will gradually develop devotion to the Lord, abandon attachment to worldly objects, draw inspiration, and get elevation of mind. You will get attached to the Lotus Feet of the Lord. It is through contact with a saint and through his blessings you will get firm conviction in the existence of God and firm faith in devotion to the Lord. You can have no Bhakti without direct contact with Mahatmas. You cannot free yourself from the fetters and ties of the world without the grace of saints. Even if you perform Tapasya, Vedic sacrifice, charitable deeds, study of scriptures, worship of Sun, Indra and Agni, you cannot

attain Bhagavan. It is only through the Satsanga of Mahatmas, you will get the passport to enter directly the kingdom of God.

There is no true happiness for him here or hereafter who has forgotten the Lord. There is no real peace for him who leads a selfish life and who separates himself from others on account of pride and egoism. Constant remembrance of the Lord will eradicate all miseries and sorrows and will confer immortality, bliss and peace on the devotee. Self-sacrifice will destroy selfishness and egoism. Self-sacrifice is the shortest route to Divine Union.

"A hara" means food. This is the literal meaning. In a broad sense it means “That which is grasped by the respective Indriva.” You should give spiritual food to the mind. Then only the mind will attain one-pointedness. Then only it will become pure. Then only you can attain Self-realisation. The eye should See the picture of your Ishtam or any other holy object. The ears should hear the Upanishads, Ramayana or Bhagavata. The tongue should speak of matter that concerns God. These are pure spiritual food for the Indriyas and the mind.

If you are a true seeker of God, you will meet Him within a moment. Remember Him always. Live by His Name. Sing His praises. Search Him in your heart of hearts. Learn the way from the devotees to love and serve God—the support of your soul, the only sovereign of the whole world, the indweller of your heart and the Inner Ruler.

Combine adoration with love. Then you will develop true Bhakti. Adoration preserves, augments, dignifies and broadens love. Endeavour in making your faith a matter of adoration and love. Practise this religion of 'loving adoration' in your daily life.

Utter in every breath the Name of the Lord. Centre your thoughts upon His Lotus Feet. Pray like Goswami Tulasidas for purity of mind. Sing like Mira the songs of surrender. Have pure, unselfish love for the Lord. Let it grow more and more every day. Do not ask God for Siddhis and worldly possessions—not even for salvation.

If you are not able to form the image of your Ishta Devata, you may try to hear either the sound of the Mantra repeated by you or to think on the letters of the Mantra in order. This will stop your mind-wandering.

Try to feel that the Lord is seated in the chambers of your heart. If the form of the Lord produced by your own imagination suits you best in your meditation. you can meditate on that form.it will assume gradually a clear-cut and well-defined shape on account of constant practice. Be regular in your meditation. Think and feel that the form is surrounded by a halo of light and the darkness in your mind is dispelled by this divine splendour.

Cling like a bee to the Lotus Feet of the Lord. Find out the path that leads to love. Taste the honey of Divine Prem. Become Premamaya. Become an embodiment of love. Live in love. Move in love. Have your very being in love.

3. Faith

Lord Krishna says in the Gita: “Three-fold is by nature the inborn faith of the embodied-pure, passionate and dark (Sattvic, Rajasic and Tamasic). The faith of each is shaped according to his own nature, O Bharata. The man consists of his faith; that which his faith is, he is even that.”

Faith indicates what man's character is. Have true, perfect, living, unswerving faith in God, in His grace, in the power of His Name. Meditate and open yourself to the Divine Light. You will be transmuted into Divinity.

Faith can move mountains. Faith can work wonders. Faith can take you to the inner chambers of the Lord. Faith can make you Divine. Faith can give you peace, inner spiritual strength, joy, freedom, immortality and bliss. Therefore, have genuine and living faith in the existence of God, in the scriptures, in the words of your Guru and in your own Self.

Faith is a rare flower of inestimable value. It must be cultivated in the garden of your heart. It must be nourished daily with the water of sincerity. The weeds of doubt and misgivings should be totally eradicated. Then it will strike deep root, blossom and bear the fruit of devotion quickly.

Faith can be strengthened by Satsanga (contact with sages and devotees), prayer, self-purification, meditation and study of scriptures. You can ascend the rungs of the spiritual ladder with the help of intense unflinching faith alone. Whenever doubts assail you, reject them ruthlessly. Open your heart to the Divine Light, the source for all knowledge, all light. Become as simple as a child. Pray from the bottom of your heart. The flame will again become brighter and brighter.

Self-realisation is a transcendental experience. You can march in the spiritual path only by placing implicit faith in the words of sages who have realised the Truth (Apta Vakya) and have attained knowledge of the Self.

Srutis emphatically declare, "Sraddha bhakti dhyana yoga davaihi--know Him by faith, devotion and meditation." Faith comes first. Without faith, you cannot practise either concentration or meditation.

Kannappa, the hunter of Kalahasti, had true living faith in Lord Siva. He gave flesh of the wild beasts daily as an offering to the Lord. Siva tested the sincerity of Kannappa one day. Tears fell from His right eye (in the Siva Linga). Kannappa was sorely moved. He plucked his right eye and fixed it in the Siva-linga. The next day there were tears in the Linga's left eye. Kannappa plucked his left eye and fixed it in the Linga. At once Lord Siva appeared before Kannappa and blessed him. He had new eyes immediately and attained the Kingdom of Lord Siva—Kailasa, the abode of immortality and eternal bliss. You should possess the same unshakable living faith which Kannappa had. Then only you can enjoy the everlasting peace of the eternal.

Prahlada was persecuted by his father in a variety of ways. He was rolled down from the summit of a mountain. He was trampled under the feet of an elephant. He was thrown into the sea. He was put in a big vessel containing boiling oil. Cobras were thrown at him. Poison was administered to him by his own mother. And yet he did not lose his faith in Lord Narayana. He was clinging to Hari tenaciously like a leech. His faith was unflinching and unshakable. Such must be the faith of aspirants of the Lord. You will be tested by the Lord in various ways. Even under extreme trials and difficulties, you should not lose your faith. Faith is your sheet anchor. It was the unswerving faith that has made the two boy-devotees, Prahlada and Dhruva, immortal. Their achievement was the work of that simple secret called "faith". All obstacles and difficulties, however great and powerful they may be, will vanish entirely before sincere and living faith.

Hear not the voice of the mind. This voice will delude you. Follow the voice of your soul. This voice will lift you up and take you to the goal.

When you hear lectures or discourses that disturb your faith, that make your faith flicker, leave the place at once. Do not keep company with such people till you grow, till you get established in the rock of Divine Prem.

Never budge an inch from your present position. Stand adamant in the bed-rock of faith. May you have the intense living faith of Prahlada!

You cannot achieve anything grand, sublime and meritorious with a weak and wavering faith. You cannot reach the goal of life with a faith that flickers at every step. You cannot ascend the summit of Nirvikalpa Samadhi or Maha-Bhava Samadhi with an impotent and passive faith. Your faith must be as firm as the Himalayas or the Sumeru mountains. It must be as steady as the lamp that burns steadily in a windless place.

Abandon all sorts of wrong beliefs, weaknesses, superstitions, wrong notions, and ideas of impossibilities. Cling fast to the faith in divine possibilities. Have faith in divine life. Aspire fervently and constantly to live in the Divine.

To the faithless the express significance of the Vedas and the Maha Vakyas is like a thing sunk in mire. It is like the howling of a dog with its eyes cast up on the heavens.

Maya havocs through doubt. Doubt seriously torments and disturbs the peace of mind. The doubt regarding the Pramana (Pramanagata Samsaya) can be removed by Sravana or hearing of the Srutis from the teacher. The doubt regarding the Prameya (Prameyagata Samsaya) can be removed by Manana or reflection on what you have heard. Viparitabhavana can be removed by constant Nididhyasana or meditation on the Immortal Atman.

Have faith in God and proper understanding of the scriptures. If ignorant people with impure hearts and perverted intellects read the Gita, Ramayana, or Bhagavata, they will only try to find out mistakes through Dosha Drishti. They begin to discuss useless points, viz., “Why Rama killed a Sudra who was practising Tapas in a forest? Is this justifiable? Why Krishna did this and that? Why did the Avatara commit such mistakes?” Such people will not be benefited by the study of sacred scriptures. Their minds are like the sieve. They will leave out the essence that has to be grasped and misconstrue things in a wrong light. Only those who have purified their minds will be able to understand the real significance of the teachings of scriptures.

Lord Rama killed the Sudra. The Sudra deserved such a capital punishment, because he murdered the son of a Brahmin. Rama did the act to maintain law, order and Dharma. Can you find any fault with the Ruler of

this universe, who is Omniscient, who is the Dispenser of fruits of actions, according to the nature of Karmas of Jivas? Some orthodox and narrow-minded persons twist the truth and play mischief. It is priest-craft and religious cheating.

Lord Rama is the Supreme Soul, the Antaryamin, the Protector of all beings. He is Omniscient, Omnipotent and Omnipresent. He is Lord Hari. He was never born. He never died. Lord Hari simply manifested in the form of Rama to do Lokasangraha and then vanished. He had Chaitanya body, though to all appearances, it appeared like flesh. Remember this, understand this point clearly.

It is simply foolishness to bring Lord Rama or Lord Krishna to the level of an ordinary human being and to speak of His acts whether justified or not. There are some idle people who for the sake of curiosity indulge in such talks just to while away the time in unnecessary discussions and debates and to show themselves that they are also learned and religious minded.

This sort of people do not do any kind of Sadhana. They have no Vairagya and waste their time in idle gossiping. They lack proper understanding of the scriptures and faith in God and His Lilas. There is no practical Vedanta these days. There is only Vedantic gossiping. It is blasphemy to say that Lord Rama did a wrong act. A real aspirant will never indulge in such frivolous talks. Time is fleeting. Every moment must be well utilised in His worship and service. There is no use of arguing. You must do something practical and cross this ocean of Moha in this very birth. Religion is realisation. We must live an ideal spiritual life every second. Whenever friends indulge in such topics turn a deaf ear, keep silence or leave the place immediately. You will enjoy peace. You will save much time for your spiritual Sadhana.

Religion is not for discussion around the club table. Religion is faith for knowing and worshipping God. Religion is practical life in the Eternal Atman through earnest, protracted Sadhana for years, after withdrawing the turbulent Indriyas and controlling the mind.

Just as coloured water penetrates freely and nicely a piece of pure white cloth, so also the instructions of a sage can penetrate and settle down in the hearts of aspirants only when their minds are calm, when there are no desires for enjoyments and when the impurities of their minds are

destroyed. That is the reason why an aspirant is expected to possess the qualifications of Viveka, Vairagya, Sama, Dama, Sraddha and Uparati before he practises hearing of Srutis, reflection and meditation: Discipline and purification of the mind and the Indriyas are prerequisites of an aspirant in the path of Truth God-realisation.

Even when God is explained, those who have not been purged of their faults and impurities, either disbelieve or misbelieve it, as was the case with Indra, Virochana, etc.

Therefore, knowledge as inculcated arises in him who has by Tapas, etc., performed either in this birth or in many previous births, purified himself. The Sruti says: "To that high-souled man whose devotion to the Lord is great, and whose devotion to his preceptor is as great as that to the Lord, these secrets explained become illumined."

The Lord Hari manifested in the form of Lord Krishna and Rama for the protection of the good, for the destruction of evil-doers, for the sake of firmly establishing righteousness. Lord Krishna says: "The foolish disregard Me when clad in human semblance, ignorant of My supreme nature, the Great Lord of all beings." Study Gita, Ramayana, Bhagavata and scriptures and have proper understanding. Do not be carried away by the turbulent senses, the influences of your useless friends and idle discussions. By devotion and faith know Him in essence and through His grace attain Supreme Bliss, Supreme Peace and Supreme Knowledge! May God bless you!!

4. The Lover's Path

The lover's path is as much difficult as that of a Vedantin or Raja Yogin. No path is very easy. There is no royal road in spirituality. It is only to encourage the aspirant that seers say that the path of devotion or love is the easiest. Every path or every Yoga demands the entire annihilation of egoism. The Karma Yogi kills his egoism through selfless service. The Bhakta kills his egoism through self-surrender or Atma Samarpana (Saranagati). The Vedantin destroys his egoism through self-denial or self-abnegation.

How difficult it is in this world to please another man and obtain his love and affection! The husband gives the best of things to his wife, purchases for her valuable clothes and ornaments, serves her in a variety of ways, days and nights and yet he is not able to satisfy her completely. The clerk

in the office works in the office from morning till sunset and yet he is not able to please his boss and obtain his love. He is served with 24 hours' notice of dismissal for a slight mistake. The Dewan (Prime minister) tries his level best to please the Maharaja and get his love and yet he fails to please him perfectly. If such is the case in worldly love, what fiery ordeal must not the devotee pass through in obtaining the love of God; what sort of pains must he not patiently bear before he can enter the domain of supreme love?

If you want to have an interview with the viceroy or the king, how difficult it is to get an appointment? The private secretary writes: "His Excellency or His Majesty is very busy these days. Wait for a fortnight." If you want to see the Deputy Commissioner, the orderly says, "Sahib is very busy, come the day after tomorrow." If such is the case in worldly matters, how difficult will it not be to have interview with Lord Krishna, the Lord of the three worlds?

The path of love is rugged, thorny and precipitous. It is the razor path. It is exceedingly narrow also. It can admit only one. When there is Lord there is no I'. When there is 'I' there is no Lord. Just as the acrobat walks on the thin wire so also the aspirant walks on a thin wire. If he is careless he may trip at any moment in the deep abyss below. Further, Maya's sword is hanging above his neck. There are crocodiles in the deep abyss below. In the front is a big fire. There are scorpions and cobras venind. How courageous then the aspirant must be! He is always supported by the invisible hands of the Unseen.

The nectar is ever oozing from the fountain of love within the chambers of the heart. The devotee drinks it and feels the warm embrace of the Lord at every step. That is the reason why he marches in the path with undaunted spirit. Without the Divine Grace the battle cannot be won by him. Without the His help and mercy, he cannot move an inch in the hazardous path.

The path of love demands endless patience and endurance. Eventually the devotee or lover comes out victorious in his battle through the grace of the Lord, just as the first prize winner comes out triumphant in the obstacle race after passing through the drum, ring, slippery plank, etc. Even so the devotee has to pass through dry wilderness and cyclonic storms. He has to cross many fierce foaming streams. He has to ascend many precipitous peaks. He has to steer clear many whirlpools in the stormy sea of this life. He has to bear patiently severe persecutions. There is no room for

lamentation or despair even if there are thousand and one difficulties. All will melt away! like rent clouds or mist before the Sun if the aspirant is sincere and persistent, if he has iron determination and fiery resolve, if he is regular in his prayers and worship.

How courageously the man who knows fencing acts when he is pelted by stones by several people on all sides! He wards off each stone very dexterously and protects himself in a marvelous manner. Even so the devotee must be bold when he treads on the path of love. The Lord will appear only when the devotee has abandoned the least tinge or trace of egoism, when he has made complete self-surrender. He will be tested in a variety of ways. When Draupadi fully relied on the help of the Lord only, and when she totally placed herself at the feet of Sri Krishna, the Lord of Dwaraka came to her rescue immediately and multiplied her clothes.

Mira had to undergo fiery ordeals before she entered the portals of the region of supreme love where her beloved Krishna reigned in supreme splendour and glory. She underwent persecutions of all sorts. She walked bare-footed in the burning sands of Rajputana. She lived on alms. She slept on the ground. She starved continuously. In spite of these ordeals she was always in rapturous delight through the grace of the Lord.

Through the grace of the Lord the fire was converted into ice for Prahlada. Burning oil was like cool oil of sandal for him. through the grace of Giridhari Gopal, the cobra was converted to a garland of flowers for Mira; poison was changed into necar and a bed of sharp nails into a bed of roses. Madhava's Grace makes a dumb man eloquent and a lame man ascend the hightst peak of the Himalayas.

The devotee must crush the bones of his right leg into a fine powder and extract oil out of it and then burn a wick with this oil for six months continuously (Akhand-Dipa). Then only he can obtain the Love of the Lord. then only he can freely enter the Kingdom of God. Then only he can dwell always in his Lord. Then only the Lord takes care of the rudder and row the boat of His devotee safely to the other shore.

What is this divine love? It is not the selfish love of worldly minded persons to get something from another. It is not the love to see a handsome face of a maiden or her piercing glances or her beautiful dress. It is not a temporary outburst of some vague emotion. The language of love is the

language of tears. It can hardly be described in adequate terms. The fortunate devotee only experiences within himself this sweet love. The flame of divine love burns in the heart of the thirsting devotee day and night. He never cares for his food and drink. He is emaciated. He pines away for the separation of the Lord. He does not sleep at night. He does not know when his Beloved will give Darshan. So he keeps vigil whole night. When the devotee has completely killed his egoism, when he has made perfect self-surrender without any reservation or secret desire for his gratification, when he thirsts like the fish out of water for meeting his Beloved, when he feels the separation from the Lord intensely, when the Viraha-Agni scorches him to the extreme degree, the Lord appears before the devotee. Then only the Lord wipes his tears, feeds him with his own hands and carries him on His shoulders.

There is no loss in total unreserved self-surrender. It is not at all a bad bargain. It is a mighty pain indeed. You will have to give your body, mind, soul and possessions unto Him. gives Himself unto you. The whole wealth of the Lord belongs to you. The Lord Himself becomes your own. You have purchased Him by showing your love unto Him. he is your slave now. You will become one with the Lord, just as the sugar when dissolved in water becomes one with water. What He wants is your whole heart fully charged with pure love. The devotee says, "I am Thine and Thou art mine also." Even if there is slightest tinge of selfishness you cannot attain Him.

The lover who has developed supreme love is not a slave of forms, formalities and dogmas. He is not bound by the rules of society. There is no outward show. There is no ringing of bells. He does not care for the sarcastic remarks of the world. His state is indescribable. He pours forth his love on his Beloved. The love is spontaneous. The flow of love is gushing in a continuous stream. There is no break. Sometime when he feels the acute pang of separation from his Beloved, he feels as if he is roasted in a hot pan over the furnace. Immediately the divine nectar dribbles. Then he feels as if he has taken a plunge in the cool waters of the Ganga.

The lover cannot bear the separation of his Beloved even for a second. Even a moment of separation is a pang of death for him. A second appears to him as one year. When there is separation, he thirsts and pants for His presence. His eyes become vacant and face becomes blank when there is burning in his heart. He gives up his food, drink and sleep. He is restless. He sheds profuse tears of love. He finds solace in the tears. His thirst is

quenched a bit. He nourishes the delicate and exquisite creeper of love through his tears. He has no thought save of his Beloved. The fountain of love within his heart is ever full. It never dries up. Love gushes out from the fountain within in a continuous stream. It is a perennial current of supreme love. Nothing can obstruct its flow.

The path of love is doubtless beset with difficulties. But the devotee who is adamant in his resolve and fiery in his Sadhana and Vairagva, who has dedicated himself and his all to e Lord, who remembers Him always, crosses over all difficulties quite easily. He gets the Divine Grace at every step, at every stage. He always lives in God.

The Bhakta says "I am Thine"; the Vedantin says "I am He." The devotee who utters "I am Thine" eventually realises the significance of the formula "I am He." "Dasoham" culminates in "Sivoham" or "Soham" or "Gopaloham", when he develops Para Bhakti or Supreme Love. The fruit of love is Jnana. Love begins with two and ends in one.

O Beloved Ram! Will you not develop a heart that bursts forth into tears of joy at the Name of the Lord? Allow the waves of love to arise constantly in your heart. Feel the warmth of the Divine embrace. Bask in the deep sunshine of Divine Love. Taste the Bliss of the Eternal Love. Drink deep the nectar of divine love and be ever happy.

5. Viraha

Viraha is the pain which the devotee experiences out of separation from the Lord. If you want to have Darshan of your Beloved, you will have to shed profuse tears in sincerity. You can hardly win Him by smiles. Read the life of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. He used to roll himself in the dust with tears of agony. That is Viraha-Agni. That is real devotion. Have you got a soft heart now, my dear readers, to weep for the Darshan of your Beloved? Do not cheat yourself. You cannot cheat Him, because He is the witness of all your thoughts. If your heart is still hard, melt it through Japa of Sri Ram, Kirtan, study of Bhagavata, Satsanga and service. Do not delay even a single moment. Stand up, O Sushil! Gird your loins. Prepare yourself. Do Sadhana. Go to a lonely place and weep with sincerity, Bhava and Viraha-Agni. Weeping is one of the ways to develop Bhakti. It must be genuine. It must come out of thirst for God.

A Bhakta has love for love's sake only. There is no bargaining in him. Just as the wife or son of a sessions-judge has no fear for the judge, although the criminals entertain great fear for him, so also the real Bhakta has no fear for God or anyone else. The old fear of retribution has vanished now. He disregards any object other than God. He sees Him in all objects. He lives for His sake only. He regards everything as His. He has completely resigned himself to the Divine Will.no respects and serves all as he sees his Lord in all. Sometimes.. weeps, sometimes he dances in ecstasy. When he feels his separation from the Lord, even for a second, he experiences dejection very keenly. This is termed Viraha-Agni.

When the devotee suffers from Viraha (pain owing to separation from the Lord), he sobs and sighs heavily. He is full of tears. Sometimes he cries out loudly and exclaims: “Where is my dear Lord? Where is my dear Hari? Where is my sweet Bansiwala (holder of the flute) of Brindavan? Where is my Dhanush Dhari (bow holder) Sri Rama of Ayodhya? I can hardly bear His separation even for a second." He looks with a steady gaze, sometimes on his neighbour, with eyes full of tears. Sometimes his body is bathed in perspiration. Sometimes he is not aware when the day dawns and the night sets in. Sometimes he repeats loudly: "Hari, Hari, Hare Rama Hare Krishna!” Sometimes his body trembles. Sometimes he falls down and rolls on the ground. Sometimes he laughs and sings aloud: "Govinda Ram Ram, Gopala Hari Hari.” Sometimes he jumps and dances round with raised hands and shows various sorts of gestures with the hands in accordance with the Bhava. Sometimes he shoots up in the air with hands upraised. Sometimes he weeps bitterly. It is extremely difficult for laymen to understand the hearts and feelings of exalted devotees who are in communion with God. Their states are indescribable. A real Bhakta can only understand another Bhakta. Sometimes he falls down and passes into a swoon (Murcha-Samadhi). The breath stops for sometime and slowly comes back again. If you visit Navadeep and Brindavan and stay there for some days, you will come across good Bhaktas who manifest the above signs. Glory, glory to such devotees! Glory to their race, yea, glory and victory to the land they live in!

The devotee possesses a heart as soft as butter through the practice of Japa, Kirtan, service of Bhagavatas, etc. The fire of Viraha melts his heart and this gives expression to the shedding of abundant tears in torrents which even drenches his clothes. When the sincere tears flow down the cheeks, the Lord appears before the devotee. It is these tears of love that

give rise to the descent of Avatara. It is these tears of devotion of Viraha that force the Nirguna Brahman to assume a Saguna form for the pious worship and meditation of Bhaktas.

The Gopis (milk-maids) of Brindavan were actually burnt by the Viraha-Agni. How devoted they were to Lord Krishnal They would not bear the separation even for a second. Sometimes Lord Krishna tested their sincerity. He used to hide Himself suddenly. They would roam about here and there in the lanes and bowers of Brindavan. They used to address the Kadamba trees: "O Kadamba trees! Have you seen our Lord? We are burnt by the fire of Viraha. What message have you brought from Him? Where is He now? How cruel is He? We are pining for His Darshan." They used to shed tears profusely during the period of separation.

They had no body-consciousness. When they started lighting their lamps at night, some even burnt their fingers badly and they were not aware of this. Their minds were on their Beloved only.

When they heard the sweet, soul-stirring melodious music of the flute—the song of the Immortal Soul—of Lord Krishna, they rushed immediately with disheveled hair and fallen garments to meet Him. They were immersed in the Love of Krishna.

The feelings of a devotee who suffers from Viraha can hardly be described in words. You will have to experience it yourself. Viraha, though a very painful experience indeed for the devotee, it intensifies his love towards the Lord.

Become a Gopi. Become a Gouranga. Become a Mira. Then only you can feel and know what is Viraha. Without Viraha you cannot meet the Lord, you cannot have His Darshan.

Mira has expressed her feelings of Viraha in the following poems. They pierce the heart of every reader:

I have watered the creeper of love with my tears,

Now the creeper has grown, the fruit shall be bliss.

The Lord of my heart is delaying.

The clouds of grief are enveloping me.

The scattered clouds have come,

But they have not brought any news from my Beloved.

I have planted the vine of love and irrigated it

again and again with the waters of tears,

The whole world sleeps, I alone sit awake

to meet my Beloved.

There is one like me who sits in her palace

and strings a necklace of pearls,

There is another who strings a garland of tears.

When shall I meet my Beloved Giridhar Nagar,

When shall the bower of joy come?

My pain in the heart will vanish only by meeting my Lord,

My Lord! I am restless,

My eyes long for Thy vision,

I feel one night as half-a-year.

O Lord! to whom shall I tell the pang of separation.

My bosom heaves at every sound,

Lord, when will Thou meet me,

I cannot bear the pain any longer.

Why art Thou so unkind, O Lord,

I am sleepless all the night,

I am waiting the whole night to meet my Beloved,

My body is emaciated O Lord, Thy Name is on my lips,

Like the Chatak looks out for the clouds,

Like the fish pines for the water,

Mira is pining to meet her Beloved.

The pain of separation burns my heart,

How can I live without my Beloved,

My heart is restless without Thy vision.

When shall I see Thy sweet face, O my Beloved.

When shall I hear Thy sweet voice,

I am quite restless, O Lord,

Meet Thou soon, I cannot wait any longer.

The secret arrow of love has pierced my heart,

It has come on the other side.

My heart is burning in separation from my Lord,

My hunger is lost, my sleep is gone,

Dwell in my eyes o Giridhar Nagar,

Enthrone in my heart! Let me hear Thy flute.

Let me hold Thee in every being,

I am dancing and singing to have a sight of Thee,

I cannot suppress my tears however much I try,

They flow like streams and drench my clothes,

I am waiting whole night to meet Thee,

every sound stirs me up.

The bosom heaves, the eyes ache, the tear burns.

I find solace in my tears, quenching in my thirst,

Joy in Thy remembrance, pleasure in Thy Name,

Bliss in my dancing, happiness in singing Thy praise,

Mira's Lord is Giridhar, she cannot live without Him.

Ask the Lord when you fervently pray: “Tell me honestly O Hari of compassion. I am sincere now. Will a day come to me in the near future, a day when tears will gush out from my eyes in silence out of sincere devotion unto Thee and drench my clothes as in the case of Lord Gouranga, when I will cry bitterly, O Hari, Hey Krishna, and roll about on earth in divine ecstasy: forgetting my body, relatives and surroundings and differences and seeing everywhere Hari and Hari alone! devotee of yore, Prahalada of happy memory? Withdraw me within, O Love! Take me into Thy sweet bosom that I may be lost in Thee for ever."

6. Gopis' Love for Krishna

Some ignorant people say: "Krishna is not the Lord. He is not an Avatara. He is a passionate cowherd who lustfully played with the Gopis.” What was the age of Lord Krishna at that time? Was he not a boy of seven? Can there be a tinge of passion in Him? Who can understand the secret of Rasalila and Madhurya Bhava, the culmination of highest Bhakti, Atmanivedan or total surrender to the Lord? It is only Narada, Suka Deva, Chaitanya, Mira, Hafiz, Ramananda, the Sakhis or Gopis that could understand the secret of Rasalila. The Sakhis only are qualified for this. Did He not play miracles when He was a boy? Did He not show that He was an Avatara of Lord Hari? Did He not show Virat Darshan to His mother when He was a baby? Did He not kill the Kaliya serpent by standing on its hood?

Did He not multiply as countless Krishnas? Who were the Gopis? Were they not God-intoxicated beings who saw Krishna alone everywhere, who saw themselves also as Krishna? The sound of the Murali could throw them in a state of divine ecstasy or holy communion. They were above body-consciousness.

Lord Krishna snatched away the clothes and rendered them nude. There is a great philosophy in this. He taught them: "O Gopis! Have no attachment for anything. Give up the body-idea and sex-idea and attain to the bodiless and sexless Immortal Atman."

The Gopis of Brindavan were wonderful devotees of the Lord. They totally surrendered themselves unto the Lord. The Gopis who are Devas got blended with Krishna through their intense love. The love they bore towards Krishna was divine love. Lord Krishna played on His flute on a moon-lit night. The Gopis rushed forth immediately to where their Lover was. Their minds were absorbed in Krishna. They forgot everything when they heard the flute.

Some left their houses while milching the cow. Some left their houses when they were serving their husbands with food. Some did not take down the boiled rice from the fire. Some did Not wait till the milk got boiled. Some had been giving milk to their children. Some were taking food. Some were serving the guests with food. But they all left their work half-finished. Their clothes, hair and ornaments were all disheveled. They ran to behold Sri Krishna. Krishna was their very Prana and soul They could not bear His separation even for a second. How devoted the Gopis were! Can you imagine? It is beyond all imagination.

When Lord Krishna suddenly disappeared they roamed from forest to forest. They asked the trees if they had seen their Lover. They enquired of the creepers, the earth and the deer. They imitated His actions and even called themselves Krishna. All their thoughts were directed towards Krishna only. They conversed about Him only. They sang all about His deeds only. They were full of Krishna. They were immersed in His love. They had no other thoughts. They had no other aspirations. They did not think of their homes or relatives. They went to the banks of the Yamuna and sang in chorus about Krishna and prayed fervently for His return.

Pleased with their devotion, Krishna suddenly appeared before them and addressed them thus:

“Welcome, ye great ones! What good can I do for you? Are all safe in Vraja? Tell me the object of your coming here. The night is fearful and wild animals are treading around. Go back to Vraja. This is not the place for women. You have got your mothers, fathers, sons, brothers and husbands. They are searching you. Do not cause pain to anybody. What more, you have now seen this forest adorned with flowers and illumined by the tender rays of the full moon, where the trees and their tender branches, gently moved by the breeze from the Yamuna, stand in all their splendour. Now go back, 0 virtuous girls, speedily to your house and look after your husbands. The calves and your children are weeping Go and let them have their drink. If you have come here, forced by your love for me, it is only meet and proper, for all people have their love for me. Devotion to husband is the one great religion for women. They should seek the well-being of their friends and bring up their children. The husband may be wicked, old, diseased or poor. But those who wish for higher Lokas should not give up their husbands. The connection with one who is not the husband is disreputable and unbecoming. You may bear love for me in other ways than by such a near approach. Therefore go back to your houses.”

The Gopis were struck dumb for a time. They were overcome with sorrow. They had given up everything for the sake of Krishna and they could ill bear to hear these harsh words. At last they broke forth: “O Lord, it is not for Thee to utter these unkind words. We have given up all objects and sought Thy feet. O Thou, difficult to be reached, do not forsake us but please think of even as the First Purusha thinks of those that seek Moksha. Thou speakest, O Love, of our duties to husbands, sons, and friends as if Thou art a religious teacher. But Thou art thyself the goal of those religious injunctions. So let them rest in Thee. Thou art the greatest friend of all beings, for Thou art verily their own Self. What do we care for husbands or sons, sources of misery as they are; we are attached to Thee, the constant source of happiness.” In these words the Gopis expressed their deepest affection for Lord Krishna. We find in the Gopis complete self-surrender (Atma-Nivedan) in its true sense. They cared not even for their lives. How could they care then for their relatives, friends and cattle?

If you want to attain Krishna, you must serve Him as a Gopi. You must adore Him with the mental attitude of a Gopi. The devotee who worships Krishna with a Gopi Bhava enjoys the Madhurya Rasa.

Lord Krishna who incarnated for the sake of eradicating evil and protecting righteousness could not be associated with the sexual instinct or passion towards the Gopis. He is the slave of His devotees.

Through Bhakti alone we can obtain the grace of the Lord, and cross the ocean of Samsara. Let us now sing Lord Krishna's Name "OM Sri Krishna Govinda Hare Murare, Hey Natha Narayana Vaasudeva." Let us ever remember the Mantra of Bhagavata which can confer on us supreme peace and eternal bliss: Om Krishnaya Vaasudevaya Haraye Pararnatmane. Pranatah Klesanasaya Govindaya Namonamah—Prostrations unto Thee O Hari, the Supreme Lord, O Govinda, O Krishna. the son of Vasudeva (the Inner Ruler of all beings), who removes the afflictions of those who prostrate unto Thee.

Glory to Bhagavatas, Glory to Vyasa, Glory to the Bhaktas! Glory to Lord Krishna! May the blessings of Lord Krishna and the Bhagavatas be upon you all!

7. God Becomes a Slave of Bhaktas

Nirguna Brahman has assumed the form of Saguna and Sakara Brahman for the sake of pious meditation of Bhaktas.

God tries His devotees in various ways in the beginning. He puts them to severe trials and tests. Eventually He becomes a slave of the Bhaktas. Lord Krishna says, "I am not in My control. I am under the complete control of My Bhaktas. They have taken entire possession of My heart. How can I leave them when they have renounced everything for My sake only?"

God is full of mercy, love and compassion. He has been described as the 'ocean of mercy'. His mercy flows like the streams of the Ganga and the Yamuna. He is depicted as having sold Himself, so to say, to His devotees. He willingly suffers endless pain in the eyes of the world in order to alleviate the sufferings of His devotees. He bears the scar left on His chest by the kick of Bhrigu as an ornament. He wears the skull of his devotees as garland round His neck. He ran with His Chakra kill the Asura who was in

the form of a crocodile, who heard the cry from Gajendra, the Lord of the elephants and gave him salvation (Gajendra Moksha).

He posed as Inspector of Schools and signed in the register when Roop Kalaji of Ayodhya was very busy in his worship of Lord Rama and forgot all about his inspection work.

Lord Rama took the form of a sepoy and did sentinel duty when his sepoy Bhakta in the Punjab left his duty and attended a Sankirtan party.

Lord Rama carried the palanquin of His devotee, late-reputed songster, Bhakta Tyagaraja of Trivadi in Tanjore district (Tamil Nadu). He also carried water for his devotee's ablution.

You are all aware that, while the dying Jatayu was in the lap of Sri Rama, Lord Rama caressed the bird which was mortally wounded in its heroic efforts to rescue Sita from the clutches of the demon-king Ravana of Lanka. He wiped its body with the tresses of His hair. Mark here, the unique, tender care and the affection of Sri Rama towards His devotee.

When the boy Namadeva placed a dish of food before the deity of Pandharpur, Vithoba (Lord Krishna) had to assume a human form immediately to eat it.

Lord Krishna became the skilled charioteer of Arjuna in the battlefield. He hastened from Dwaraka and ran barefoot when He heard the pathetic cry of Draupadi to supplement her cloth.

When Mira was about to drown herself in the river, Sri Krishna stood before her and put her in His lap. Sri Krishna guided the blind Vilvamangal to Brindavan by holding the stick in His hand. When His barber Bhakta was sick, He took upon His shoulders the duty of shampooing the Raja; he massaged the feet of the Raja during all the days of absence of the barber. He conducted the marriage ceremony of Narsi Bhagat's daughter. He brought ghee for the Sraddha of Narsi's father and patiently bore the rebukes of Narsi's wife.

Lord Krishna acted the part of a menial in carrying money to a Nawab to pay the debts of His Bhakta, Damaji. He dug a well for His devotee in Pandharpur. Mark here. What kind of work the Lord Himself has done. Work is worship. Work is Pooja of Narayana.

How merciful is the Lord! My hairs stand on ends when I think of His merciful nature. I become silent and dumb. O Prema! I really pity those Nirishvara-Vadins, agnostics, materialists, socialists, Bolshevists, etc. May God bestow on them good understanding and bliss!

There was a vaishnava saint by name Nammalvar near Tirunelvely in Tamil Nadu. He was very reputed. He used to enter into Samadhi under a tamarind tree. Madura kavi was an aspirant. He saw a prominent light in the sky consecutively for three days. He was not able to understand this phenomenon on the first day. As it continued for three days, he began to think that God wanted to help him mysteriously. He directed his steps towards the course of the light towards the south from Madurai to Tirunelvely. The light took him to Nammalvar underneath the tamarind tree where he was in Samadhi at that time. Madura Kavi broke his Samadhi by striking to pieces of stones. Nammalvar blessed Madhura Kavi. Mark here how the Lord had helped his Bhakta Madura Kavi.

When Ekanath, the celebrated Maharashtra saint was in a depressed mood, he heard an akasavani in the sky asking him to proceed to Swami Janardana. He followed the dictates of God, became a disciple of Swami Janardana and had Darshan of Lord Krishna. This was another method by which the Lord had helped his devotee.

Saint Tukaram of Dehu was instructed or rather initiated into the mysteries of the Mantra “Rama Krishna Hari” by Lord Krishna in his dream.

Watch the mysterious ways of the Lord. Feel his presence everywhere in the blue sky, in the green verdure, in the rays of the sun, in the cry of that yonder body, in the sound of the nightingale, in the melodious Pranava Dhvani of the Ganga. Become merged in Him by constant meditation of His beautiful form.

8. Avataras

Whenever there is decay of righteousness and rise of righteousness, the Lord manifests Himself for the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked and for the establishment of righteousness. Lord Rama and Lord Krishna had no physical bodies. Their bodies were not made of five elements. They had divine forms. They had Chinmaya bodies (Aprakritika). They had no real birth and death like human beings. They appeared and disappeared, just as a Yogi does. Their bodies were not left in this world. There is no destruction for their bodies..

There is descent of God for the ascent of man. Avataras (incarnations) are rays of the Lord. They are born of Isvara or Hiranyagarbha. When the work of Lokasangraha is over, they disappear from the world. There are Purna-Avataras with full Kalas (rays). There are Amsa-Avataras (part). There are Avesha-Avataras. There are Lila-Avataras. There are Maya-Guna Avataras. In creation these Maya-Guna Avataras are Tapas, Brahma, the Rishis and the nine Prajapatis. In preservation, they are Dharma, Vishnu, Manu, Deva and Kings. In Pralaya (destruction) they are Adharmas, Siva, serpent and Asuras. The Lord who is an ocean of grace incarnates out of compassion for the humanity to do them supreme good. He takes a body out of His free will. The Lord spreads His Yoga Maya and engages Himself in sports or Lilas. Who can comprehend the secrets and mysteries of Avataras? Where, when and in what manner and in how many forms He is sporting? It is the genuine tears of a devotee that trickle down from his cheeks out of Viraha, that bring the descent of the Lord in the form of an Avatara. How powerful is a devotee? How potent is his Tapas?

The Rishis of yore have expounded the doctrine that the Lord of the Universe exists in sixteen expanding Kalas (rays or digits of manifestation), that one digit of His life manifests in the vegetable kingdom, two in the animal and from five to eight n the human, according as we pass from the savage at one end of the scale of the highest evolved state at the other. The Lord's manifestation in His Avataras, which ranges from 9 to 16 digits or rays and the Sastras speak of 10 digits or 12 or 14 digits Avataras as well as the full (Purna) Avataras are those in whom 16 Kalas (rays) are present. Lord Krishna was a Purna Avatara Theosophists also mention 7 rays, 12 rays, etc., when they describe about the stages of spiritual development of their Master and Adepts.

There are twenty-four Lila Avataras:

1. Varaha—Lord Hari assumed the form of Varaha (boar) in order to raise the earth from the waters and destroyed with His tusks the Daitya, Hiranyaksha.

2. Yajna—He was born of Ruchi and Akuti. The Suyama Devas were born of Yajna. He removed the fears of Triloki.

3. Kapila—He was born of Kardama Prajapati and his wife Devahuti. He founded the Sankhya system of philosophy. He taught Brahma Vidya to His mother.

4. Dattatreya—He was the Avatara of the three Murtis—Brahma, Vishnu and Siva.

5. The Kumaras—Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatana and Sanatkumara. They were the four mental sons of Brahma (Manasikaputras born of the Sankalpa of Brahma). They did not want to marry. They retired into forest for Tapas and meditation as Naishtika Brahmacharis (virgin youths) and attained Self-realisation. They disseminated Brahma Vidy knowledge of the Self.

6. Nara-Narayana—They were born of Dharmaa wife Murti, daughter of Daksha. They practised intense Tapas in Badarikashrama (Badrinarayana). The celestial nymphs were not able to allure them.

7. Dhruva—He was a boy-devotee like Prahlada. He could not bear the words of his step mother. He went into the forest and made severe Tapas. He got initiation from Narada Rishi. He received from him the twelve Akshara Mantra, Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya. He had direct Darshan of Lord Hari.

He attained Dhruvaloka (the region of the pole star). The devotion of Prahalada only was purely of a Nishkamya type. He wanted Lord Hari and Hari alone. Dhruva had Sakamya Bhakti in the beginning. He wanted dominions. Later on when his heart was purified he also developed Nishkamya Bhakti.

8. Prithu—He took out riches and eatables from the earth.

9. Rishabha—He was born of Nabhi and Sudevi or Meru Devi. He roamed about as a Paramahamsa.

10. Hayagriva—This horse-headed Avatara appeared in the Vedic Yajna and promulgated the Vedas.

11. Matsya—He preserved all beings and the Vedas from the waters of the Pralaya.

12. Kurma—The tortoise appeared at the great churning of the ocean and supported the Mandara mountain.

13. Narasimha—The man-lion Avatara appeared from the pillar and destroyed the father of Prahlada, Hiranyakasipu. The appearance of the Lord from the pillar indicates that the Lord is All-pervading.

14. Hari-He saved the elephant king Gajendra of the famous story of Gajendra Moksha.

15. Vamana—He appeared before Bali and measured the three worlds by His two steps.

16. Hamsa—He narrated Bhakti Yoga, Jnana and Bhagavata Purana to Rishi Narada.

17. The presiding deity of each Manvantara.

18. Dhanvantari—He disseminated the science of medicine (Ayurveda).

19. Parasurama—He destroyed the Kshatriyas who disregarded the Brahmanas and sacred scriptures.

20. Rama—He killed Ravana.

21. Krishna—He killed Kamsa and taught Bramha Vidya to Arjuna and Uddhava.

22. Vyasa—He narrated the Vedas and set them in order He wrote the eighteen Puranas.

23. Buddha—The Asuras came to know the secrets and mysteries of Vedas. They oppressed the people. Buddha incarnated. He created confusion in the Asuras by preaching a variety of bye-religions.

24. Kalki— He will appear before the end of Kali Yuga to establish Dharma and destroy unrighteousness.

9. Philosophy of the Word Radha

In Vrindavan Dhama, where Murali Krishna is even now roaming about in the sacred Kunj and other places, people sing His Jugal Name “Radhe Shyam” or “Radhe Krishna” in a sweet, melodious tune, which will pierce even the stony hearts of rank materialists, confirmed scientists, socialists and atheists. You will hear the sweet Jugal Dhvani “Sita Ram” in Ayodhya.

In the West, ladies are respected and honoured first. Seats are given to them. Westerners are unconscious worshippers of Sakti in a way. Ladies are manifestations of Sakti.

In these two Jugal (combined) Names “Radhe Shyam” and “Sita Ram”. Radha or Sita comes first. Radha savs to Bhaktas, "If you remember me, I will introduce you to your Father, L Krishna and get for you peace, knowledge and immortality. There is a great deal of philosophy in the word Radha. Just imagine that there is a circle in the black-board which stands in front of you. Within the circle the letters R-a-dh-a are written.

If you read from the lower 'a', you will make out the word as Aradh i.e., Aradhya which means worship. Radha says, Oh Bhaktas! If you do Aradhana of Lord Krishna, my Beloved, if you sing. His Name "Radhe-Shyam Krishna' with Bhava. Prema and Sraddha (feeling and love), you will have His Darshan soon, and all your miseries will come to an end."

If you read from the upper 'a', you will make out the word “Adhara" which means prop (support or substratum). Radha says, "O Bhaktas! If you worship Lord Krishna with the Bhava that He is the substratum or support for the Universe, He will free you quickly from this Samsaric wheel of births and deaths."

Now you read from "Dha". You will make out the word "Dhara" which means "flow." Radha says, "I shall tell you how to worship Lord Krishna. Bhakti should flow from your hearts like Dhara—continuous flow of oil or

water (Taila-dharavat) when it is poured from one vessel to another. Your minds should be steadily fixed at the Lotus Feet of the Lord always (Ananya Cheta, not thinking of another, Satatam, always). Then only you will get Mukti (liberation). Then alone you will have constant companionship of the Lord." She gives here a description of Para Bhakti.

You have got the magic words "Radha, Aradha(na), Adhara and Dhara." Will you remember these quadruplets or four terms? This will help you in developing Bhakti.

When you worship Lord Krishna, with the Bhava that He is the support for this universe, it is called Tadasraya Bhakti. Just as lotus flower and swans depend upon a lake of water for the keeping up of their very lives, so also the devotee depends upon Lord Krishna for the maintenance of his very life. He feels that Lord Krishna is his Prananatha or Prana Vallabha.

Next comes Tad-Rupa Bhakti. Just as a fish is deeply immersed in water and it cannot live when it is taken out of water, so also the Bhakta is immersed in the Lord through intense Aradhana. He cannot remain without Him even for a second. This is Saroopya Mukti.

The third stage is Tanmaya Bhakti. Just as camphor when burnt becomes one with the fire, so also the devotee becomes one with the Lord. The meditator and the meditated, the thinker and the thought, the Upasaka and Upasya become one and the same_ This is Sayujya Mukti. In the beginning the ignorant devotee says, "Dasa-evaham I am His." When he grows in Bhakti he says "Tavaivaham—I am Thine." When he develops Tanmaya Bhakti, he exclaims in joy with rapturous ecstasy and delight "Tvamevaham-I -am Thou." The Gopis who were searching Lord Krishna in the grooves of Vrindavan, eventually became Krishna themselves like the analogy of wasp and caterpillar when they developed Tanmaya Bhakti.

Victory to Radha! Victory, victory to Lord Krishnal Victory to Bhaktas! Blessed is the sacred forest of Brindavan Blessed are those who sing His Name “Radhe Shyam—Radhe Krishna.” Glory to His Name!

10. Glory of a Bhagavata

A Bhagavata is one who has realised or seen Bhagavan. He is a liberated soul. Vedantins use the term “Jivanmukta.” Bhaktas use the term

“Bhagavata.” These two terms are like Pani in Hindusthani and water in English.

Words cannot adequately describe the exalted state of a Bhagavata. His merciful look removes the agonies of millions of persons. His sweet words bring joy, solace, strength and peace to those who surround him. His thoughts radiate message of peace and goodwill all around. His very presence brings hope to the hopeless and strength to the depressed. Indra and other Devatas stand up with folded hands to receive him with due respect and honour. Siddhis and Riddhis roll under his feet. Rajas, Maharajas and emperors place their hands at his Lotus Feet. There is a peculiar grace in his walk, charm and lustre his face, sweetness and elegance in his speech and grand his gait. His sympathetic glance can infuse life in a de The dirt from his body is medicine for removing various incurable diseases.

In the Chhandogya Upanishad is explained the glorious description of a Bhagavata:

Should be desire the region of Pitri (father), he attain it with glory, for verily the moment he wishes it, the Pitris receive him with welcome.

“Next, should he desire the region of Matri (mother), he attains it with glory, for verily the moment he wishes it, the Matris receive him with welcome. .

"Next, should he desire the region of Bhratri (brother), he attains it with glory, for verily the moment he wishes it, the Bhratris receive him with welcome.

“Next, should he desire the region of Swasri (sister), he attains it with glory, for verily the moment he wishes it, the Swasris receive him with welcome.

"Next should he desire the region of Sakhas (friends), he attains it with glory, for verily the moment he wishes it, the Sakhas receive him with welcome.

“Next, should he desire the region of Gandhamalya (scents and garlands), he attains it with glory, for verily the moment he wishes it, the Gandhamalyas receive him with welcome.

"Next, should he desire the region of Annapana (food and drink), he attains it with glory, for verily the moment he wishes it, the Annapanas receive him with welcome.

"Next, should he desire the region of Gitavaditra (song and music), he attains it with glory, for verily the moment he wishes it, the Gitavaditras receive him with welcome.

“Next, should he desire the region of Stri (woman), he attains it with glory, for verily the moment he wishes it, the Stris receive him with welcome.

Whatever country he desires, he attains it with glory, for Verily the moment he wishes it, it abideth for him.”

The Bhakta becomes independent in all the worlds. By his mere will, his father, mother, brothers, sisters, friends come and connect themselves with him. He is of pure nature and as such,his will is infallible, like that of the Lord. To whatever place he is attached and whatever besides those enumerated he desires by his mere will, all desirable places and things do come to him: and thereby having none of his wishes unfulfilled and having obtained all that he desires, he feels happy and great.

He obtains self-lordship. He becomes Lord of speech, Lord of the eye, Lord of the ear, Lord of understanding. All the gods bring an offering for him. In the Vedanta Sutras Chapter IV, Section IV, Sutra 17, you will find with the exception of world-business (creation) the Bhagavata possesses all lordly Powers." He is remote from all-world-business because released souls have minds, they might be of different minds, and one might have the intention of preserving the world, while another might wish to destroy it. Such conflicts can only be avoided by assuming that the wishes of one conform to those of another and from this it follows that all other souls but the Lord depend upon the Highest Lord.

The will of the Bhakta differs in nature from the will of ordinary men. It has the power of effecting something that possesses such stability as the special purpose needs. Just as the one flame of a lamp can pass over into several flames (lighted at the original flame) because it possesses the power of modifying itself, thus the soul of a Bhagavata, although one only, multiplying itself through its lordly power, enters into all those bodies. For, scripture says that in this way one may become many. "He is one fold; he is three-fold, five-fold, seven-fold"—Chhandogya Up. VII-26-ii. The Self,

because possessing the quality of having true wishes (Satkam, Sat-Sankalpa), may be supposed to create other bodies with internal organs conformable to the original one organ, and, the Self dividing itself through the division of its limiting adjuncts, it may be possible to give a soul to each created body. This is the topic which the books on Yoga treat in the chapters explaining the connection of the soul with several bodies.

When the Bhagavata wishes to have a body, he appears with one; when he wishes to be disembodied, he is without one, for he has various wishes and all wishes are realised.

Glory and victory to such exalted Bhagavatas who are visible moving gods on this Earth!

Chapter III

ESSENTIALS IN BHAKTI

1. Drink the Essence

There are as many sects in this world as there are sands on the seashore. People have lost sight of the true essence of religion. They fight unnecessarily for petty dogmas, for externals and non-essentials. They publish nasty leaflets, one abusing the other. In the public platform one preacher abuses another preacher of a different cult. One preacher of a certain school of thought will declare openly the defects of another school of thought. Even the so-called educated people shamelessly fight amongst themselves. Lathi-charges and bloodshed occur in Kumbha Melas. What is all this? This deplorable state of affairs is going on now-a-days. It is shocking to see this state of affairs in the name of religion.

You can reach Mount Kailas through different routes, via Almora, via Gangotri, via Badri-Narayan, via Joshimutt, via Kashmir, etc. The destination is the same though the routes are different. The final destination for all the rivers is the ocean. You can reach Calcutta from Madras by train or by steamer or by motor car or by aeroplane. What does it matter? The destination is the same.

There are different types of minds. People have different tastes, tendencies, temperaments, inclinations and capacities for Sadhana. So various paths are indispensably requisite. Dvaita school, Monistic school, qualified Monistic school, Advaitic school Theosophy, Sufism, Shintoism, Confucianism, Mazdaism and many more 'isms', Arya Samaj, Brahma Samaj 'Dharma Samaj and many more Samajs are needed. There must be as any Samajs and 'isms' as there are types of minds. Lord Siva says there are crores of ways or paths for controlling the mind.

Doctrines may also diverge as widely from one another as do paths but the goal to be reached, i.e., Self-realisation is always the same.

It is only jealous, intolerant, narrow-hearted, petty-minded people who fight amongst themselves for trifling things. Differences melt away when one's heart expands, when one gets God-realisation. Realised souls can never fight. They have equal vision. They have equal love for all. They look to the essentials of every sect or cult which are same everywhere

Every religion, every cult and every sect declares: "There is one Truth. It has to be approached by speaking truth, by loving all, by leading a life of continence, by leading a life of purity and self-control, by concentration, meditation and devotion."

Four blind men began to feel for the first time an elephant. One caught hold of the elephant's ears and said, "The elephant is like a winnowing fan." Another caught hold of the legs and said, "The elephant is like a pillar." Another caught hold of the tail and said, "The elephant is like a big whip." They began to fight amongst themselves regarding their experiences. In the same way some villagers who saw for the first time a fire-brigade engine began to fight amongst themselves. One man said, "this is all fire," another said, "this is all water", a_ third remarked "this is all iron." Dire ignorance is the cause of petty quarrels. Similar is the case with the petty-minded ignorant sectarians, who fight amongst themselves for trifling matters.

Just as a tree appears to be of an equal height for a man who has climbed to the top of the hill, so also for a realised Bhagavata, who has reached the sublime heights of divine consciousness and Bhava Samadhi, all sects and all people look alike.

Brahman is one. Truth or God is one. Srutis are one. Vedas are one. Virtue and devotion, concentration and meditation and Samadhi are one. Karma is one. Dharma is one. Realisation, true religion, the religion of love, the religion of Self-realisation are all one. Energy is one. Sun is one. Moon is one. Akasa is one. Thought image is one, though languages are different. Mercy and sincerity are one. There is no such thing as American sincerity or Japanese honesty. Body is one. It is made up of the five elements in England, China and Africa. Blood is one. The blood of a Chinese, African negro, English aristocrat or American millionaire is the same. It contains the same blood plasma, haemoglobin, red corpuscles, white leukocytes. The feeling is the same in all. You call anyone fool or vagabond. He becomes angry. Everyone gets hunger, thirst, defecation, micturation, exhilaration, depression, happy and sorrowful moods. The heart, liver, spleen, bowels, the organs of action and sensation, the intellectual faculty that comprehends, are the same in all. The goal to be reached by all, viz., God-realisation is also the same. "Look here! If you can cross over this ocean of Samsara by worshipping even a walking stick, care not, my dear brother, what others remark. Go ahead. Walk in your own way. You are bound to

enjoy the sweetness of divine Prem. Be bold. Be cheerful. March courageously in the spiritual path. Do not care for public opinion."

Take the kernel, core or essence and ruthlessly throw away the skin or the shell. Are they not fools who leave the grain and Waste their time in quarreling about the chaff? I pity them. They are hopeless, incorrigible specimens of humanity.

Life is short and time is fleeting. Time is more precious. Remember the goal and the purpose for which you have taken this physical body. Struggle hard towards the fulfilment of the end you have come here to accomplish. Let all march courageously towards the goal, be it by train or Tonga, car or plane. Let all strive after the true religion, which is fundamentally the same in all sects or cults or schools.

Now then friend, if the essence of all religions is one and the same, of what avail is this wrangling and quarreling among sects? Let us therefore strive in right earnest after the achievement of that great end of human life, the true essence of all religions—devotion to God, divine Prema or Bhakti—which alone can free us from the Samsaric wheel of births and deaths, give us highest knowledge, infinite bliss, supreme peace, eternal satisfaction and Immortality!

2. Sow the Spiritual Seed in Youth

Devotion has absolutely nothing to do with age, caste, position or rank or sex. Generally men of the world say, "We will practise Dhyana, devotion, etc., when we retire from services." This is a serious mistake. How can you do serious spiritual Sadhana after all your energy is squeezed out in service, etc.? You can hardly sit even for fifteen minutes. You have not got the strength to discipline your Indriyas. The spiritual seed of devotion must be sown in your heart when you are young, when your heart is tender and untainted. Then only it will strike a deep root, blossom and bear fruit when you become old, when you retire from service. Then only you will not be afraid of the God of death—Yama. You will meet him with a smile.

Foolish parents do not allow their sons who have devotional temperaments to do any sort of spiritual practices at home. They put serious obstacles in their ways. They are afraid that they will leave their houses and take to Sannyasa. If they read Gita or any other religious book, their parents prevent them from doing so. What a shame? A young advocate of Lahore

told me that his father prevents him from going to Haridwar even. Such is the condition of grown-up parents, who crush the devotional growth of their sons. How deplorable is the state of affairs? They get them married when they are in their teens just to tickle their nerves and spoil their lives and future.

For all beings a human birth is difficult to obtain, more so is a male body, rarer than that is Brahminhood, rare still is the attachment to spiritual path, and still more rare is realisation. There are three things which are rare indeed and which are due to the grace of God, viz., a human birth, the longing for Darshan of Hari, and the protecting care of a realised Bhagavata. The man having by some means obtained human birth with a male body and with mastery of the Vedas in addition, is foolish enough not to exert for God-realisation and verily commits suicide; for he kills himself by clinging to things unreal. What greater fool is there than the man who having obtained a rare human body and a masculine body too, neglects to achieve the real end of this life? Let people quote scriptures, let them wander about the world visiting the four Dhamas (Badri Narayana, Dwaraka, Puri and Rameshwar) with a single Koupeen, there is no liberation for anyone without the direct Darshan of Hari. There is no hope of immortality by means of riches. Therefore, the man of understanding and faith should strive his best for God-realisation having renounced his desire for pleasures from external objects, duly approaching a good, generous, realised Bhagavata and fixing his mind at the lotus-feet of Hari!

3. Anyone Can Become a Bhakta

It must be remembered that no distinction of caste or colour or sex finds-a place in the realm of Bhakti. Sandilya also says in his Sutras, "Even men and women of low castes have a right to devotion." Even the greatest sinner, a cut-throat of the darkest realms can develop Bhakti. There is no room for despair for Lord Krishna says, "Even if the most sinful worships Me with undivided heart, he too must be accounted righteous, for he hath rightly resolved. Speedily he becometh dutiful and and goeth to the eternal peace. O Kaunteya, know thou for certain that My devotee perisheth never. They who take refuge in Me, O Partha, though of the womb of sinful, women, Vaisyas or sudras, also tread the highest Path."

Even a Chandala can keep companionship with the Lord if he has devotion in his heart. Nandanar, who was born in an extremely low caste—in the

eyes of the worldly-minded persons only, who boast of high castes—became a devoted saint and had Darshan of Lord Nataraja, in Chidambaram. Bhagavatas even now perform his Katha in Tamilnadu.

Tiruvalluvar, the author of the reputed Tirukkural was also of inferior caste. Dadu, the mystic was a weaver. So also was Kabir. Avvayyar, a virgin lady and a great devotee, was born in a low family. Guha-Nishada was also of a low caste. He had great devotion to Sri Rama. When Sri Rama was in exile, Guha-Nishada received Sri Rama with sincere Prema. Bhagavan Sri Ramachandra freely accepted his hospitality. Guha-Nishada even moved with Sri Rama in terms of equality. Rai Das, a reputed Bhakta, was a cobbler. Sabari, the Bhilini, was a great devotee of Sri Rama. He even ate the fruits previously tasted by her. Sadhana, a butcher, was a good devotee. Women also can approach God. They can have God-realisation quickly and easily too as they possess a naturally loving heart. They are more devotional than men. The Sneha-Vritti (affection) is predominant in them. Surdariji, a great lady devotee, once went with her father-in-law to Vrindavan forests. She was in Samadhi (communion with Lord Krishna). A Mohammedan came to molest her. Lord Krishna took the form of a tiger and devoured him. If one has real devotion to the Lord and constant remembrance, he will always be protected by Him. There is no doubt about this.

4. Do Not Bargain With God

A real Bhakta says, “I do not want anything from my Beloved. Let my mind be ever fixed at the lotus-feet of the Lord. Let my soul ever cling to Him." If a devotee once tastes the sweetness of divine Prema. What else can he desire but alone?

The boy Dhruva who went into the forest to get domination by worshipping Hari said, I do not want kingdom. I have my Beloved with me now. All my desires are gratified now after I had Darshan of Hari. My mind no longer craves for earthly possessions."

Prahlada was a true devotee. When Lord Hari asked Prahlada “My dear Prahlada, I am pleased with your sincere devotion. Ask for any boon you like. I will grant you this very second.” Prahlada replied, “My Lord! Tempt me not by offering boons. I have sought shelter in Thee in order to annihilate all desires, to have pure love for Thee, to have love for the sake

of love only. He is not a genuine devotee who worships the Lord with some ulterior motive only in view.

Give up shop-keeping, trading or bargaining or doing commercial business with God. He who asks for a boon or anything from his Ishta save Prema-Bhakti is not a real devotee. He becomes a trader in love, a trader in religion. A college student bargains with God. He says, “O Sri Ganesa! Make me pass in my examination this year. I shall offer 108 coconuts in Thy temple.” Can you call this pure divine love? It is pure mercenary business. Do not convert a sacred temple as a Chowringhee or Hazratganj. He who bargains with God for little earthly things or some mundane possessions is a downright hypocrite. He is not a true servant or devotee of God.

5. Ishvarapranidhana

Praising Ishvara, remembering and worshipping Him by words, thoughts and actions and an unswerving devotion unto Him, is called Ishvarapranidhana. Ishvarapranidhana-Bhakti is an unbroken stream of love towards the feet of the Lord, a love that is the be-all and end-all of a person's existence and during which he is, as it were, absorbed in the object of his devotion.

Madhusudana Sarasvati has also described it as a state the mind, when previous to its being utterly annihilated and absorbed, it becomes of the nature of Bhagavan or Lord.

Patanjali Maharshi says in his Raja Yoga philosophy, Ishvara-Pranidhanadva"-Ch. I, Sutra 23. Success in Samadhi is speedy by devotion to Ishvara. (This word is translated by some as feeling the Ominipresence of the Lord.)

Irana Pranidhana is one of the three Angas or limbs of Kriya-Yoga according to Yoga Sutras—Chapter II. Here the word “Isvara-Pranidhana” means surrendering the fruits of work to God. The root meaning of the word is placing of anything under another to the fullest extent. Pra-fulness, ni-under and dhana-placing. "Whatever I am doing beautiful or ugly, virtuous or vicious, with desire or without desire. I renounce all that on Thy account; I do all things with submission unto Thee." The renunciation of fruit means the doing of an action without thinking in connection with it of the fruit to be obtained thereby. That is the reason why Lord Krishna says,

"Thy business is with the action only, never with its fruits; so let not the fruit of action be thy motive, nor be thou to inaction attached" (Gita, II-47).

Then again Isvara-Pranidhana is one of the five items of Niyama according to Raja Yoga philosophy. Here it means worship of God. Isvara, according to Patanjali Maharshi, is a special Purusha untouched by misery, the results of action and desires.

6. Sweet Are the Uses of Adversity

You will find in the writings of Shakespeare, "Sweet are the uses of adversity which, like the toad, ugly and venomous, wears yet on its head a precious jewel." The best thing in this world is pain or adversity. During pain only man remembers God. Pain is the eye-opener. The quest of God begins from pain. The starting point of philosophy is from pain. Had there not been pain in this world, man would never have attempted to get freedom (Moksha). He would have been satisfied with mundane life only. In trving to get rid of pain, he comes across Truth or the abode of Peace Param-Dhama. He starts prayer, Japa, charity, selfless service, study of religious books, etc. Bhaktas always pray to God, "O Lord! Give us sufferings always so that we shall ever remember Thee. Kunti Devi prayed to Lord Krishna, "Hey Prabhu,let me always have adversity, so that my mind shall be ever fixed at Thy Lotus Feet." Adversity develops power of endurance and will-force. Adversity develops fortitude and forbearance. Adversity melts a stony heart and infuses devotion to God. Adversity is a divine blessing in disguise. Do not be afraid, therefore, when you are in adverse circumstances. Adversity has got its own virtues. People have risen to power and position from adverse conditions of life. Adversity makes a man to struggle hard. The late Sir T. Muthuswami Iyer, who was Chief Justice, High Court of Madras, was in adverse circumstances. He used to study at night under a municipal street lantern. Many prime ministers of England had risen high from adverse conditions of life. All the prophets, saints, Fakirs, Bhaktas, Yogis of yore, had to struggle hard in adverse circumstances. Sankara, Jnana Deva, Rama Tirtha and Tuka Rain were all placed in adverse circumstances. They were all highly benefited by adversity. They would never have achieved greatness and glorious spiritual heights had they been placed in luxurious conditions.

God puts his devotees to severe tests and rigorous trials before he gives His Darshan. Tulasidas, Ramdas, Surdas were all put to tests of several

sorts. If God tries His devotees, He, at the same time, bestows upon them immense inner strength, power of endurance and spiritual patience also. Prince Surendranath told me, "Swamiji, I do not see any good in renunciation. All the Sadhus, Sannyasins and Mahatmas also suffer from diseases." I replied, "Dear Prince, you are young. Sadhus are quite indifferent. You cannot understand their internal state. They do not identify themselves with their bodies. They may even cry out but their inana Sthiti is not broken. They are firm in their Brahma-Nishtha. They have no sufferings at all. The by-standers may foolishly imagine that they are undergoing sufferings. Their minds are fixed on God or Brahman. Their strong conviction is that there is no body, in the past, present or future, and that they are all-pervading Atman or pure consciousness. Swami Ramakrishna Paramahamsa had cancer of the throat. He never felt any pain as his mind was fixed always on Mother Kaali. He had not time to think of his body even. A Thyagi, Sadhu or Sannyasi has his inner peace, delight and divine bliss, quite unknown to the worldly man. Even if you offer them kingdom, riches, etc., they will shun them ruthlessly. Riches have no value before their eyes. They know their worthless nature. My dear prince, you have really no idea of the happy life of a Sannyasi. You are still worldly-minded, though there is a slight trace of Bhakti in your heart."

Prince Surendranath said, “Swamiji, thank you very much. I now understand your point well. The matter is quite clear now. I am really sorry, I had a wrong notion."

Just hear, Prince Surendranath, this anecdote of two devotees. Rup and Sanatan, though enjoying regal powers, left their royal states at the bidding of Lord Gouranga and passed the rest of their days under trees, relying on food that came to them unsought (Yadrichalabha Santushta). They had all the sufferings which people would consider unhearable; yet they were, according to their own testimony, far happier when they were under trees than when they could sleep in palaces. The Bhakta has his celestial joys unknown to the men of the world. Surendranath said, “Swamiji, you have thrown a flood of light on the point. My doubts have vanished now. I am grateful indeed"

7. Method of Combination

Namdev, Ekanath, Ramdas, Tulasidas, Tukaram, Mira, Madhusudana Swami were among a few blessed souls to whom God gave His Darshan. These Bhaktas were Yogabhrashtas (fallen from Yoga). They came into the world with a great asset of spiritual Samskaras. They worshipped God in several births with sincere devotion. They did not do much Sadhana in their final cycle of birth or incarnation. The devotion was natural and spontaneous in them on account of the force of pr Samskaras of Bhakti. Ordinary people should a special measures and special Sadhana for developing Bhakti rapidly. New grooves, new channels, and new avenues have to be cut, in the old stony, devotionless heart. Several methods have to be harmoniously combined to cultivate Bhakti to a maximum degree. If one method fails to kindle Bhakti, you will have to resort to other methods also. Just as the doctor saturates the system with mercury in various forms through various routes, such as inunction method by rubbing mercury ointment in the skin, by the method of hypodermic injection, by the intravenous method through veins, by oral method in the form of mixtures through mouth, so also you will have to saturate your heart with Bhakti through prayer, Japa, Kirtan, service of Bhaktas, charity, Svadhyaya, virtue, Tapas, Samadhi, etc.

Pranayama steadies the mind and removes the tossing of the mind. Therefore it is a help in developing Bhakti. Yoga includes all those processes, physical as well as super-physical, whereby the Vrittis or the modifications of the mind are restrained and the mind is rendered fit to realise the presence of the Supreme. Just as you cannot see the reflection of the sun in the water of a lake when there are waves, when the water is in an agitated condition, so also you can hardly see the self-effulgent God when the mind-lake is in a disturbed condition. Calm the mind. Still the bubbling thoughts. Silence the emotions. You can see God face to face. Yoga is an auxiliary in Upasana or worship.

Chapter IV

SANKIRTAN

1. What Is Sankirtan

Sankirtan is the Svarupa of God. Dhvani is Sankirtan. Sankirtan is the essence of the Vedas. The four Vedas originate from sound. There are four kinds of sound, viz., Vaikhari (vocal), Madhyama (from the throat), Pasyanti (from heart) and Para (from navel). Sound originates from navel. Vedas also originate from navel. Sankirtan and Vedas are born from the same source.

People sit together and sing the Names of the Lord with harmony and concord and with Suddha or Divine Bhava. This is Sankirtan. Sankirtan is accompanied by the play of musical sounds as the word 'San' precedes 'kirtan.' Sankirtan is an exact science. It elevates the mind quickly and intensifies the Bhava to a maximum degree.

Nama and Naami are inseparable. Nama is greater than the Naami. Even in worldly experience the man dies but his name is remembered for a long time. Kalidasa, Valmiki, Tulasidas, etc., are remembered even today. Nama is nothing but Chaitanya. Sankirtan is singing God's Name with Bhava and Prema or divine feeling.

There must be perfect harmony and concord, one Svara, one Tala, when Sankirtan is conducted. Then only there will be Joy (Ananda) and elevation of the mind. All the members of Mandals and Sabhas should observe Niyamas for their rapid growth. They should do Japa of at least two Maalas of any Mantra, should observe fasting on Ekadasi, should Mouna or vow of silence for two W of silence for two hours daily, should take Sattvic Mitahara, should be very moderate in sexual intercourse and should study one chapter of the Gita daily. They should get up at 4 o’ clock in the morning in the Brahmamuhurta and do Japa and meditation. They should spend one tenth of their income in charity. They should speak the truth. They should not hurt the feelings of others. They should give up Ninda censuring others). This will produce Chitta-Suddhi quickly. On occasions of marriage and other minor ceremonies, Sankirtan should be held in houses. This is practised in Mathura, Meerut, Hardoi and other places, the present custom of singing obscene songs on such occasions should be totally abandoned.

2. Science of Sankirtan

God is a mystery. Mind is a mystery. The world is a mystery. How Sankirtan transmutes human nature into divine nature, how it overhauls the old vicious Samskaras, how it changes the mental substance, how it transforms or metamorphoses the Asuric nature into pure Sattvic nature and how it brings the devotee face to face with God is also a mystery. Science and reason can hardly explain the modus operandi of Sankirtan. Reason is an imperfect instrument. A man of weak intellect can be defeated by one who has a stronger intellect. Reason cannot explain many life problems. Intuition transcends reason but it does not contradict reason.

There is a great Sakti in every word. The very utterance of the word 'hot pakouri' brings saliva in the mouth. If you utter the word faeces when a man is taking his meals, he will immediately vomit. When such is the case with ordinary words, what to speak of the Names of God! Every Name of God is filled with various divine Saktis and nectar.

An objector says, "If I say 'sugar-candy, sugar-candy,'can I get it? How can I see God if I simply utter Rama, Rama?" In the case of sugar-candy sugar candy is outside; but God riseides in the very chamber of your heart. he is close to you. By repeating 'Rama, Rama', the mind become one-pointed.it melts in silence and in the heart you get Darshan of God. The Name of God is as good as God Himself. God is Chaitanya and so is his Name. It is not so with other objects or names of objects.

There is a man in sound sleep. The Pranas are there, in and with him. He will not hear you if you call him by addressing "Prana, Prana." Just call him by his name Rama or Shyama, he will hear you and will get up from his sleep. Such is the power of Nama. Nama is nothing but Chaitanya personified.

Earth is greater than all objects. As earth rests on Adi-sesha, Adi-sesha is greater than the earth. As snake is an ornament of Lord Siva's hand, Siva is greater than the snake, Adi-sesha. As Lord Siva meditates on Sri Rama, Rama is greater than Lord Siva. As Rama's Name is still remembered, the Name of Rama is greater than Rama himself. Singing of the Names of God has a tremendous influence over the mind that is filled with passion and evil desires. It brings incalculable benefits. There is no doubt of this.

The first manifestation of God is ether or sound. Sound is the Guna (quality) of ether. Sounds are vibrations. They give rise to definite forms. Each sound produces a form in the visible world and combinations of sound create complicated shapes. The text books of science describe certain experiments which show that notes produced by certain instruments trace out on a bed of sand definite geometrical figures. It is thus demonstrated that rhythmical vibrations give rise to regular geometrical figures. The Hindu books on music tell us that the various musical tunes, Ragas and Raginis have each a particular shape Which the books graphically describe. For instance the Megha Raga is said to bear a majestic figure seated on an elephant. The Vasanta Raga is described as a beautiful youth decko flowers. All this means that the particular Raga or accurately sung, produces aerial etheric vibrations which create the particular shape. This view received corroborations from the experiments carried on by Mrs. Watts Hughes, the gifted author of ‘Voice Figures.’

Mrs. Hughes delivered an illustrated lecture before a select audience in Lord Leighton's studio to demonstrate the beautiful scientific descoveries on which she has alighted as the result of many years’ patient labour. Mrs. Hughes sings into a simple instrument called an “Eidophone” which consists of a tube, a receiver and a flexible membrane, and she finds that each note assumes definite and constant shape, as revealed through a sensitive and mobile medium. At the outset of her lecture, she placed tiny seeds on the flexible membrane and the air vibrations caused by the notes she sounded, danced them into definite geometric patterns. Afterwards she used dusts of various kinds’ lycopodium dust being found particularly suitable. A reporter, describing the shapes of the notes, speaks of them as remarkable revelations of geometry, perspective and shading. “Stars, spirals, snakes, wounds in wheels and imagination rioting in a wealth of captivating methodical designs" such were what were shown first. Once when Mrs. Hughes was singing a note, a daisy appeared and disappeared, and "I tried" she said, "to sing it back for weeks before at last I succeeded. Now she knows the precise inflections of the particular note, that is a daisy and it is made constant and definite by a strange method of coaxing and alteration of crescendo and diminuendo. After the audience had gazed entrapped a series of daisies, some succeeding rows of petals and some with petals delicately viewed, they were shown other notes, and these were pansies of great beauty. “How wonderful, how lovely” were the audible exclamations that arose in the late Lord Leighton’s studio and exquisite form succeeded exquisite form on the screen, The flowers were followed by

sea monsters, Serpentine form of swelling rotundity full of light and shade and detail, feeding in miles of perspective. After these notes came, there were trees, trees with fruit falling, trees with a foreground of rocks, trees with sea behind. “Why,”exclaimed people in the audience, “they are just like Japanese landscapes.”

When in France, Madame Finlang's singing of a hymn to Virgin Mary, "O Eve Marium" brought out the form with child Jesus in her lap and again the singing of a hur Bhairava' by a Bengali student of Benares studying in in France, gave rise to the formation of the figure of Bhairava with his vehicle dog.

Thus the repeated singing of the Name of the gradually builds up forms of the Devatas or the special manifestations of the Deity, whom you seek to worship and this serves as a focus to concentrate the benign influence of the Being which, radiating from the centre, penetrates the worshipper of the Kirtanist.

When one enters the state of meditation, the inner Vritti flow is greatly intensified. The deeper one goes into meditation, the more marked is the effect. The concentration of the mind upwards sends a rush of this force through the top of the head and the response comes in a fine rain of soft magnetism. The feeling arising from the downward power sends a wonderful glow through the body, and one feels as though bathed in a soft kind of electricity.

The above experiments demonstrate the following facts:

1. Sounds produce shape.

2. Particular notes give rise to particular forms.

3. If you want to reproduce a particular form, you must recite a particular note in a particular pitch.

4. That, for that purpose no other note and no other pitch, chanting even the identical note will avail. For instance in-"Agnimile Purohitam"__"Vahnimile Purohitam" will do but not lle Agnim Purohitam." In doing so the efficacy of the Mantra is gone. You cannot therefore transpose or translate a Mantra if you do it, it will cease to be a Mantra. When a

Mantra is defective either in Svara or Varna, it is incorrectly directed and may produce a result just contrary to what was intended.

But such is not the case with Rama Nama or any Name of the Lord, viz., Siva, Krishna, or Hari. These names may be sung in any and every way. “Ulta Nama Japat Jaga Jana; Valmiki Bhaye Brahma Samana.” All the world knows that saint Valmiki, (previously known as rogue Ratnakar) became one with Brahman (the Lord) by uttering even the Ulta Nama-Mara-Mara, for Rama-Rama ‘Rama Nama Japte raho-rijh bhajo ya khij-ulta pulta oopje jasa dharti ko biha. “Therefore repeat the Name of the Lord, Repeat it either in love (with feeling and Bhava) or in anger, it will have its proper effect; just as the seeds must sprout and” grow, either sown properly or thrown into the fields in whatever way the peasant pleaseth to do.

3. Benefits of Sankirtan

He who does Sankirtan forgets the body and the world. Sankirtan removes Dehadhyasa (identification with the body).

It brings superintuitional knowledge. Tukaram was an agriculturist. He could not even sign his name. He was always doing Sankirtan of Lord Krishna's Name "Vitthala, Vitthala" with cymbals in his hands. He had Darshan of Lord Krishna in physical form. His innersight (Jnana Chakshu) was opened by Sankirtan. His inspiring Abhangas are texts for M.A., students of the Bombay University. Wherefrom did the unlettered, illiterate, Tuka derive his knowledge? He tapped the fountain of knowledge through Sankirtan. He penetrated into divine source through Bhava Samadhi, that was brought about by deep Sankirtan. Does this not clearly prove that God exists, that the Svarupa of God is knowledge and that Sankirtan has tremendous influence in attaining this knowledge?

Sankirtan brings Darshan of God or attainment of divine consciousness in this Kali Yuga. Sankirtan develops love. Sankirtan is the easiest, surest, safest, quickest way for attaining God-consciousness. Those who do Sankirtan in the beginning for the sake of mental enjoyment will realise the purificating effects of Sankirtan after some time, and then they will themselves do it with Bhava and Sraddha. There is a mysterious power in the Name of the Lord. Man cannot live on bread alone, but he can live on the Name of the Lord.

The harmonious vibrations produced by the singing of the Names of the Lord help the devotee to control their minds easily. They produce a benign influence on their minds. They elevate the mind at once from its old ruts or grooves to magnanimous heights of divine splendour and glory. If one does Sankirtan from the bottom of his heart with full Bhava and Prema, even the trees, birds and animals will be deeply influenced. They will respond. Such is the powerful influence of Sankirtan. Rishis and Siddhas visit the place where Sankirtan is held. You can see brilliant lights all round the pandal. How it brings about these beneficial results, how it brings the devotee face to face with God is now explained.

Jivatma or the individual soul can become one with Paramatma or the Supreme soul only through the process of evolution or ascent through different rungs of the spiritual ladder by means of Nada-Upasana. Nada is of two kinds, viz., Sthula (gross or expressed, Anahata). And Sukshma (subtle or unexpressed, Anahata). The former leads to the latter. The Samyoga or union of Prana with Anala or fire in the human soul is indispensably requisite if the individual soul wishes to unite with Para Brahman or attain the highest Nirvikalpa Samadhi The fire or Agni of the Muladhara represents the “RA” Bija. It ascends to meet the Prana from the Murdha, or Brahmarandhra, which represents the “MA” Bija. The combination of RA-MA is the Taraka Bija by which the individual soul crosses to the other shore of fearlessness and immortality and attains eternal bliss and supreme joy. Sankirtan is an easy approach to the Sukshma-Nada and eventually to the divine communion.

The Antahkarana is made of subtle matter; the subtle elements of rudiments of matter, viz., the Tanmatras go to constitute Antahkarana. The mind is formed out of the air Tanmatra. Chitta is constituted out of the water Tanmata: Ahamkara is formed out of the earth Tanmatra.

The subtler the element, the more powerful it is. Water is more powerful than earth because it is more subtle than earth. Water removes earth away. Fire is more powerful than water, because it is subtler than water. Fire dries up all water. Air is more powerful than fire,

because it is more subtle than fire. Air blows away fire. Ether or Akasa is more powerful than air. because it is more subtle than air. The air rests in Akasa. Akasa is the support for the air. Air is born of Akasa; fire is born of air; water is born of fire; earth is born of water. During cosmic Pralaya, the earth is reduced or dissolved into water, water into fire, fire into air, and the air into the Akasa.

Mind enjoys the five objects (Vishayas). The barrier that separates man from Paramatman or the Supreme Soul is the mind. These five subtle elements,-earth, water, fire, air and ether, which go to constitute the body of the Antahkarana, are the five dacoits, who have plundered the jewel of Atman. Akasa is the ring leader. If you control Akasa—if you can subdue the ring leader, the other four elements or dacoits will come under your control. If you can control the five elements, you control the mind very, very easily. The function of Akasa is sound. If you can sing Hari's Name in a sweet tone with rhythm and harmony, you can control Akasa Tattva and thereby the other elements and the mind. Therefore Sankirtan helps the aspirant to control the mind easily and thereby attain God-consciousness. Lord Hari is immensely pleased when one sings His Name.

Melodious music soothes the nerves. In America doctors cure diseases by music. Shakespeare says, "The man who hath no music in himself nor is moved by the concord of sweet sounds is fit for treason, stratagem and spoils. The motions of his spirit are dull as night, his affections dark as Erebus. Let no such man be trusted. Mark the music."

The mind is purified by constant Sankirtan. It is filled with good and pure thoughts. Daily Sankirtan strengthens the good Samskaras. The mind of a man, who trains himself in thinking good, holy thoughts, develops a tendency to think of good thoughts. His character is moulded and transformed by continuous good thoughts. When the mind thinks of the image of God during Sankirtan, the mental substance actually transforms into the form of the image of God. The impression of the object is left in the mind. This is Samskara. When the act is repeated very often, the Samskara gains strength by repetition and a tendency or habit is formed in the mind. He who entertains thoughts of divinity, becomes transformed actually into the divinity himself by constant thinking and meditation. His Bhava and disposition is purified and divinised. The meditator and the meditated, the worshipper and the worshipped, the thinker and the thought, become one and the same. This is Samadhi. This is the fruit of Sankirtan or Upasana.

My dear friends! Do Sankirtan daily. Disseminate Sankirtan Bhakti far and wide. Develop Visvaprem through Sankirtan. Establish Sankirtan Mandalis everywhere. Bring Vaikuntha on carth-in every house—by doing Sankirtan! Realise your Sat-Chit-Ananda state!!

4. Sankirtanists, Wake Up!

The present-day Sankirtan Mandalis or Samajas have assumed the form of music clubs. The members do Sankirtan for the sake of mental recreation only. There is neither internal divine Bhava nor Suddha Prem. There is neither Ruchi for Nam nor sincere faith in the power of His Names.

When there is neither music nor play of harmonium during Sankirtan, the members leave the place at once. The attendance becomes very poor. Many have taken to Sankirtan for the sake of enjoyment (Manoranjan) or for a little titillation of the auditory nerves or organ of hearing. Hence there is no real growth in the Sankirtan movement. Sankirtan societies live and die like mushrooms. Sankirtanists should do Sankirtan without any musical instruments. When there is no harmonium or Tabla, Sankirtanists find it difficult to do Kirtan. This is a serious drawback or weakness. There is a peculiar indescribable when Sankirtan is done without musical instruments. Advanced students who have got purity of heart can use musical instruments as they are helpful. If there is no purity, music will hurl down a man into the deep abyss of ignorance and darkness and fill the mind with Tamas and passion.

Sankirtan should be done in the Brahmamuhurta at 4 to 6 early morning. You will then derive immense benefits. The Bhava will manifest without any effort or struggle. When Sankirtan is done at night with musical instruments, the music may excite the passion in some unregenerate, crude, Asuric souls, who are more or less like the horizontal beings, as the brutal instincts are predominant in them despite their intellectual development. A Sanskrit scholar of vast erudition, a research scholar with M.A., Ph.D., degree becomes a hopeless prey to lust when his mind is filled with animal passion.

People do Sankirtan with surprising enthusiasm and vigour for a year or two, but afterwards they do not evince the same interest. They become slothful and torpid. This is not desirable. The same zeal should be kept up all throughout life. Just as food and drink are not dispensed with even for a day, so also Sankirtan should not be stopped even for a day. Sankirtan is indeed a spiritual food, nay, it is a physical and mental tonic as well. You can live on Sankirtan.

Today you are perfectly aware that the Sankirtan movement is growing by leaps and bounds. Various Mandalis have been founded in several parts of

India and several English educated persons, including atheists, agnostics and determinists are doing vigorous Sankirtan with Kartals and cymbals in their hands. Several Sankirtan Utsava Conferences are being held in Bulandsahar, Banda, Gwalior, Roorkee, Saharanpur, Jallunder, Jammu and other places. It is hoped, therefore, a great Avatar is expected within a short time. The ground is being prepared.

It is a great pity that the Sakhi Bhava is misunderstood by most of the devotees in these days. They have taken this Physical body as the Sakhi. They dress themselves like maidens and do various fantastic, ludicrous actions. This is a serious and lamentable mistake. The Jiva-Chaitanya or the individual soul is the real Sakhi. The Sakhi-Bhava is purely an internal state. It is not a mere external show. The individual soul is united with the Supreme Soul by self-surrender or Atma-Nivedana. The lover and the beloved become one. This is the acme of Bhakti or the culminating point. Bhakti begins with two and ends in one. As some people have not grasped the real significance of Sakhi Bhava, corruption takes place in some Sankirtan associations. The presidents of the Sankirtan associations should entirely eradicate this sort of canker which is corroding the sap of the tree of devotion and is ruining the integrity of the Sakhi cult of Bhakti.

When you sing Hari's Name, feel that the Lord Hari is seated in your heart, that every Name of the Lord is filled with divine potencies, that the old vicious Samskaras and Vasanas are burnt by the power of the Name, that the mind is filled with Sattva or purity, that Rajas and Tamas are completely destroyed, that the veil of ignorance is torn down. Meditate on His form and attributes also. Then only you will get maximum benefits of Sankirtan.

5. Canker in Sankirtan

Many people in the garb of Sannyasins, with beards and matted hair, many pseudo-Yogins and Yogic charlatans, many false preachers and false prophets and pseudo-Avataras appear on the platform, delude and dupe the people in a variety of ways. One preacher says, “O my lady disciples! There is no difference between males and females. Everything is Brahman or Krishna. I am Krishna. You are all Gopis. Come. Let use Rasa Lila." In this way he corrupts and pollutes the atmosphere.one pseudo-Vedantin says: “Assi Brahman, Tussi Brahman. I am Brahman. Thou art Brahman. Let us enjoy the bliss of Brahman.” They take the body as the pure Self. Hopeless Vedantins! Can the filthy body be taken as the pure Atman?

O dear friends! Beware of these false prophets and false messengers of God and pseudo-Yogins. They are Satan's messengers who also preach in the same way as the real messengers of Sanatana Dharma do. They mislead the people and put on the garb of saints and Yogins and Sannyasins, to fill up their stomachs: “Udara-nimittam bahukrita-veshah.” That is all. They are black sheep. Vigorous investigations should be made and they should be ousted ruthlessly. Hence, an organised spiritual organisation is the imperative need of the hour.

Even in the Sankirtan field, corruption has come. The canker of corruption must be removed and the field of Sankirtan must be well-guarded by the Sankirtan Acharyas and preachers. The Sankirtan movement in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Punjab is growing strong now and it is gratifying to note that in every house and every Mohalla, Sankirtan is vigorously done.

Many pseudo-Sankirtanists have joined the movement to eke out their livelihood, and Sankirtan has become a profession for them, because Sankirtan pays them now. Many pseudo Miras and pseudo Bhava Samadhists have sprung up now. They openly put on Bhava Samadhi on the platform and say that they have seen Lord Krishna. They deceive the people by saying that they will show the people Lord Krishna. This is all down-right duping. The people should not be deceived by these pseudo-Kirtanists. Market boys are trained for performance of Lila and they are brought to the Sankirtan platform for acting. This produces baneful influence on the minds of spectators. Lila can be done only by disciplined, highly evolved souls or Mahatmas or Sannyasins amidst select devotees. It should not be enacted on a public platform. The worldly-minded people are strongly in favour of Lila Kirtan and exclaim "Wa, wa, wa” when they see the Lila. How ignorant they are! They are easily duped by Satan's messengers.

Darshan of Lord Krishna is not so very cheap. Miras and Avataras come out only once in five hundred years. Have Satsanga with Mahatmas. Study religious scriptures.Do Japa. Do meditaion Reflect “Who am I?” Develop Sattvic Virtues. Practise Yama and Niyama. You will be free from the influence of Satan and his messengers. They will be terribly afraid of you and take to their heels.

May you all live drowned in an ocean of divine ecstasy in a fully illumined state by regular practice of Kirtan and complete self-surrender to the Lord?

6. Akhanda Kirtan

Akhanda means "continuous' or 'without break'. Kirtan means singing the Lord's Name. Akhanda Kirtan is the continuous singing of Lord's Name. Akhanda Kirtan is a very effective spiritual Sadhana. There is eradication of all evil Vrittis during this period. The mind can be easily controlled by Akhanda Kirtan. The wandering habit of the mind towards sensual objects can be easily checked by Akhanda Kirtan. By the practice of Akhanda Kirtan, the mind has neither time nor opportunity to think of sensual objects. Akhanda Kirtan is a potent and easy means to capture the mind. The mind is filled with Sattva. There is supreme peace and joy in Akhanda Kirtan.

Akhanda Kirtan brings communion or Samadhi quickly. It purifies the heart quickly. It produces high purity of mind and other incalculable benefits. Utsava for three days may not produce a lasting impression. To induce Samadhi and divine ecstatic mood quickly, there is no other agent more powerful than Akhanda Kirtan. In Jhansi and other places in Uttar Pradesh there have been Akhanda Kirtans for two months, three months, six months and even for one full year.

There is no Yajna greater than Akhanda Kirtan. In Kali-Yuga a well conducted Akhanda Kirtan is tantamount to one hundred Asvamedha sacrifices. If you weigh the fruit obtained by conducting an Akhanda Kirtan in one scale, and the fruit of one hundred Asvamedha Yajnas in the other scale, the former will go down. This is specially suited for this iron age. It does not cost you anything. During Akhanda Kirtante Maha-Mantra “Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare; Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare" should be repeated.

At the end of Dvapara Yuga, Sage Narada went to the Creator. Brahma, and wanted to know the easiest means of crossing the ocean of Samsara in the Kali age. Brahma replied that by repetition of the Mahamantra consisting of sixteen names, a man can easily get over the Samsara. The sixteen names are those mentioned above. These names destroy the Avarana, which produces the sense of individuality of the Jiva, surrounded by the sixteen Kalas (rays). Then like the sphere of the Sun, which shines fully after the clouds disperse, Parabrahman alone shines. No rules are to be observed in the repetition of these names. Brahma also said, “Whosoever, in a pure or an impure state, utters these always, attains the

same world of, or proximity to, or the same form of, or absorption into Brahman. He is at once released from all bondage."

During ordinary Sankirtan, any Namavali (God's Names) can be repeated. On Sivaratri and other festivities in which Lord Siva is invoked, Akhanda Kirtan of 'Om Namah Sivaya' can be done.

Akhanda Kirtan should be conducted during holidays in all villages, Mohallas and cities. Akhanda Kirtan can be arranged for twelve hours, twenty-four hours and upto one week or even more, according to convenience. The Akhanda Kirtan may commence at 4 a.m. or 6 p.m. The former is better. The longer the period, the better the effect.

You can conduct Akhanda Kirtan for twenty-four hours, even with four, six or eight members. Here, there is no necessity for changing batches. All can sit together and sing continuously. Some like to conduct Akhanda Kirtan without a person to lead them. All people sing together. Here the members will get tired soon. If one man leads, there is rest for the leader and others also. This is a better method.

Batches of twenty or more can conduct Akhanda Kirtan. After every two hours, bathes can be changed. There shoould be no break in the Kirtan. There must be perfect harmony throughout. The Mahamantra should be sung in a sweet melodious tune. Members should have preliminary training for some time in Kirtan. Untrained people will produce breaks. Particularly those who wish to lead the party should have very good training. If there are breaks, it is no longer an Akhanda Kirtan. Great care should be taken to keep the continuity of the Kirtan. He who leads must be ever vigilant. He must take his turn the very second the other party breaks. There must be perfect discipline.

One person should repeat the Mantra in a melodious sweet tune and all others should follow him in chorus. The sixteen Names "Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare; Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare" constitute one Mantra. You should not repeat or sing either "Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare," or "Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare," twice. For individual Japa and Kirtan, the whole Mantra should be repeated at a stretch. But during Akhanda Kirtan, in order to avoid too much strain and break, the first half of the Mantra, viz., "Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare," should

be repeated by the person who leads the Kirtan, and when it is followed in chorus by the party, the other half should be repeated. The same half should not be repeated twice. No break in the Kirtan should be caused between the time when the leader of the party ends the Kirtan and the others following him in chorus begin it. Some people cannot sing even one-half of the Mantra without a break. They should train themselves to sing one-half of the Mantra without any break in the middle. Especially those who lead the Kirtan should take particular care of this point; otherwise it cannot be an Akhanda Kirtan. Thus the continuity of the Kirtan can be maintained.

After every hour the person who leads the Kirtan can be changed and another person can take up his place. The period duration of each member can be from half-an-hour to one hour It is better to keep half-an-hour for each man after midnight us sleep overcomes him after that time. The programme as to should guide the Kirtan at each particular hour should be pre arranged and the programme distributed beforehand. He who leads must stand up and sing. He can overcome sleep by standing. Those who are on the verge of being overpowered by sleep must stand up and sing.

In Akhanda Kirtan, you should not sing in a very high pitch. You will get tired soon. If you sing in a very low tone, the members will not take much interest. There will not be any enthusiasm and joy. You will have to sing in a happy, medium tone.

At times there may not be sufficient number of hands to follow the Kirtan in chorus. In that case the Kirtan can be continued by a single person also. Only when a reliever comes and relieves him he could leave the hall. The reliever at the time of taking charge should sing with the other person who is already doing the Kirtan, at least for five minutes and then only the former person could leave the hall. Harmonium, or Kartals, could be used especially when a single person conducts the Kirtan. Kirtanists may either sit and do Kirtan or go round the idol or photo which is kept in the hall. During cough and other natural obstructions of the throat, Kirtan can be done mentally. But if the break will exceed a few seconds a reliever should be called for through some sign or ringing the bell which is specially kept for this purpose. Night shift Kirtanists should invariably sleep in or near the Kirtan hall. They will be highly benefited by mantric vibrations. The Kirtanist, till his turn is finished, should not talk to anybody. The Kirtan

should generally be done with closed eyes; turning to the other sides should be avoided, and only the image could be gazed at.

When you do Kirtan, place the image of the Lord-Krishna, Hari or Rama—in your heart and fix the mind on the image. Close your eyes when you do Kirtan. There should be Akhanda-Dipa (ghee-lamp) in front of the Lord's Picture in the hall till the function is over. One should be in charge of the ghee-lamp and see that it burns continuously till the function is over.

All those who lead the Sankirtan should sing in the same tune. Change of tune will induce break in the Kirtan and there will be no harmony. All members should be well trained in singing the Mahamantra in one tune in a melodious manner.

There must be two persons to inspect the members. Members will be overpowered by sleep in the late hours of the night and these inspectors should watch over them and keep them vigilant. Difficulty will be experienced in keeping vigil. Many will begin to sleep at 2 a.m. Those who take part in Akhanda Kirtan should not take tea. They can take a cup of hot milk at mid-night. All persons should be present at the time of beginning and ending of the Akhanda Kirtan.

All those who participate in Akhanda Kirtan should observe strict continence (Brahmacharya). They should take Sattvic diet. They can take fruits, milk, potatoes, etc. (phalahara). If they can give up salt and sugar for four days, it is a good Tapas for them. Now, there is a chance to give up that inordinate, indiscriminate clinging to salt and sugar. They can take milk without sugar. They can take potatoes without salt. All these are helps to control the mischievous Indriya—the tongue. If the tongue is conquered, all other Indriyas can be easily controlled. Those who cannot undergo the above discipline can take their usual food.

Those who take part in Akhanda Kirtan should wear clothes washed by their own hands. They should walk bare-footed to the place where the Yajna is held. They should not sleep immediately after the Kirtan is over.

There should be a separate platform for Akhanda Kirtan when conferences are held. A red cloth with the Mahamantra written thereon should be hung in the place where Akhanda Kirtan is conducted. Ladies also can take part separately during their fixed hours.

The Akhanda Kirtan should terminate with Havan, with Mahamantra, Gayatri and Gita verses, on the next morning. Dasangam-Jay or barley, seasumum seeds, rice, dried cocoanut pieces, dried grapes or resins, dried dates and ghee all these should be well mixed. A portion of this is given to all the members. This mixture is thrown into the sacrificial fire as Ahuti or oblations uttering the sacred Mantras and the word "Svaha" at the end of each Mantra. If one hundred Maalas of Japa of Mahamantra are done during Akhanda Kirtan, ten Maalas (one-tenth) of Ahutis or oblations should be offered during the Havan. Havan should end with Purna-Ahuti (oblation) with chanting of Santi Mantra:

“Om Purnamadah Purnamidam Purnat Purnamudachyate, Purnasya Purnamadaya Purnamevavasishyate.”

For Purna-ahuti, one full coconut filled with ghee covered all round with a red piece of cloth and dipped in ghee is offered with the above Mantra. The Havan Bhasma (sacred ash) should be preserved in a tin and distributed to the members and other people. Application of this Bhasma with faith and Bhava on the forehead will remove many incurable diseases. The function should be closed with Arati and distribution of Prasada. At the close of Akhanda Kirtan Yajna, Mahatmas, Sadhus, Sannyasins and the poor, should be sumptuously fed.

Blessed is the place where Akhanda Kirtans are held. Twice blessed are those who arrange for such a religious Sacrifice (Yajna). Thrice blessed are those who partake in it and drink the divine Nectar by repeating the sweet Names of the Lord. Glory be to such sincere and earnest devotees!

Chapter V

BHAKTI SUTRAS OF SANDILYA

Chapter 1—Part 1

Sandilya Rishi starts his aphorisms with an enquiry into the nature of devotion.

अथातो भक्तिजिज्ञासा॥१॥

1. Now, then, an enquiry into the doctrine of devotion.

Anybody can become a devotee. Bhakti Yoga is open to all. The desire for liberation alone makes one a fit person for developing devotion and taking up the path of Bhakti Yoga. Merits acquired in the previous births generate devotion in the heart of a man in the following birth. Liberation comes to him who is devoted to the Lord.

सा परानुरक्तिरीश्वरे ॥१॥

2. Devotion is supreme love of God.

Primary devotion is intense attachment to the Lord.

Prahlada's prayer is “May such love, as in the case of the worldly man flows ceaselessly outward to the objects of this world, flow ceaselessly to Thee in my heart.”—Vishnu Purana, I-20, 17.

Anurakti (love) arises after one obtains the knowledge of the Majesty, Beauty, Vibhutis or Aisvarya (attributes) such as Omniscience, Omnipotence, Omnipresence, etc., of the Lord.

तत्संस्थस्यामृतत्वोपदेशात् ॥३॥

3. Because the Vedas (scriptures) teach that he who lives in God is immortal.

He who is devoted to God, who abides in the Lord, attains Immortality.

ज्ञानमिति चेन्न द्विषतोऽपि ज्ञानस्य तदसंस्थिते॥४॥

4 It is not knowledge, because of the absence of devotion in the knowledge of one who has hatred.

An objector may say that the term “Samastha” in the above Sutra denotes knowledge of Brahman and not devotion to the Lord and that he who has knowledge of Brahman gets immortality. This is not correct. The word “Samastha” means devotion only, and not knowledge. Misra who hates certainly not devoted to Gupta, although he has knowledge of the latter.

तयोपक्षयाच्च ॥ ५ ॥

5. And because of the decay (of knowledge) by her (devotion).

To know God is to love Him. Knowledge is gradually eclipsed by devotion. When love grows, it will eclipse the knowledge. Knowledge gradually vanishes when devotion or love (Prem) dawns. Knowledge fades or wanes when devotion increases or waxes.

द्वेषप्रतिपक्षभावाद्रसशब्दाच्च रागः॥६॥

6. Devotion is attachment because it is opposed to hate and because of the use of the word "Rasa."

Devotion is contrary to hate. Therefore, it denotes attachment (to God). That which is opposed to hate is attachment. Devotion and attachment are similar because there is absence of hate in them. But the mind of a devotee is attached to God, and the mind of a worldly man is attached to the objects of the world. Bhakti (devotion) in the form of attachment (Anuraga) leads to the attainment of God-realisation. The word Rasa means taste for the worldly objects as well as taste for God.

न क्रियाकत्यनपेक्षणाज्ज्ञानवत॥७॥

7. No; for it also, like knowledge, does not depend upon the form of action.

When the impure Vasanas (worldly desires) are destroyed. Love for God spontaneously arises in the pure mind. Actions cannot generate devotion or love for God though they can nourish and energise it.

अत एव फलानन्त्यम्॥८॥

8. Therefore its fruit is eternal.

What is this fruit? God-realisation or attainment of Immortality? As devotion is not of the form of action, its fruit is of the nature of eternity. The fruit of action is of a perishable nature. When the force of action terminates, the result or fruit of action also will come to an end. “When the accumulated merit, the fruit of action is exhausted, having enjoyed the vast heaven-world, they enter the world of mortals.” (Gita, IX-21.) But, the fruit of devotion lasts for ever. How can there be an end to immortality? Quite impossible.

तद्वतः प्रपत्तिशब्दाच्च न ज्ञानमितरप्रपत्तिवत् ॥९॥

9. It is not knowledge, because (in the Gita) the word Prapatti is used in the case of one who is devoted to the Lord, just as the word Prápatti is used in the case of those who seek to worship other minor gods.

“At the end of many births, the wise man comes to me, realising that all this is Vaasudeva (the Immortal Self); such a great soul is very hard to find.” (Gita, VII-19.)

"Those whose wisdom has been rent away by this or that desire go to other gods, following this or that rite, led by their own nature.” (Gita, VII-20.)

The word Prapatti has been used in the two verses in the very same sense. In the latter verse, Prapatti, when used in relation on to the minor deities, means devotion to them. Similarly, The word Prapatti when used in relation to the Lord means devotion to the Lord.

Chapter 1–Part II

Thus it has been shown in the first part that devotion is the true cause of Immortality. Now the Rishi Sandilya proceeds to discuss the nature of Bhakti, Yoga and Jnana.

सा मुख्येतरापेक्षितत्वात्॥१०॥

10. Devotion is the principal means, because all other means are dependent on it.

प्रकरणाच्च ॥११॥

11. And also from the topic under discussion.

Svapneshvara says that the reference in this Sutra is to the verse of the Chhandogya Upanishad.

Rati or attachment to God or devotion gives the fruit, viz., God-realisation. Therefore "seeing" becomes its accessory only.

दर्शनफलमिति चेन्न तेन व्यवधानात् ॥१२॥

12. It cannot be said to be the fruit of knowledge, because (in the above passage सः स्वराट् भवति the word "Sah" (he) intervenes.

The full text is as follows (Chh. Up. VII-25-ii):

आत्मैवेदं सर्वमिति स वा एष एवं पश्यन्नेवं मन्वान एवं विजानन्नात्मरतिरात्मक्रीड आत्ममिथुन आत्मानन्दः सः स्वराट् भवति ॥

Can it not be said that the immortality or Svarajya is the result of knowledge? Can it not be said that knowledge is the principal topic under discussion in the above Sutra? No; because the text "Sa esha svarat bhavati" the word "Sah" (he) intervenes. The pronoun "Sah" refers to the nearest noun viz the man possessed of Atmarati or attachment to Self. and not to the remote one "Pasyan" one possessed of knowledge Svarajya or Moksha (God-realisation) is the result of Atmarati (devotion) to God but not of knowledge of God. Knowledge leads to devotion and devotion leads to the attainment of God-realisation.

दृष्टत्वाच ॥ १३॥

13. From observation also.

(We see that devotion is the result of knowledge and that knowledge is not the result of devotion).

Ordinarily it is observed that in the case of human lovers that love results from the knowledge of each other. The bridegroom sees the beauty of the bride, gets knowledge of her qualitics and education and then begins to love her. So does the bride also.
Knowledge helps or favours the growth of devotion.

अत एव तदभावाद्वल्लवीनाम् ॥१४॥

14. Therefore, in spite of the want of it (knowledge) God-realisation of the milk-maids (of Vrindavan) took place.

The milk-maids (Gopis of Vrindavan) attained liberation through attachment and devotion to Lord Krishna without the help of knowledge. This clearly indicates that knowledge is only a subsidiary or auxiliary to devotion. If knowledge is a fundamental element, liberation will not result in its absence.

भक्त्या जानातीति चेन्नाभिज्ञप्त्या साहाय्यात्॥१५॥

15. If it is said that one knows (God) through devotion (as the Gita says), it is not so, because of the help received from the term Abhiinapti (implied in the word Abhijanati in the Gita, XVIII-55.)

Abhinana is renewed knowledge or recollected bowledge. It is knowledge of objects previously known. When the knowledge is strengthened through Abhijnana, the devotion also becomes pure and strong.

प्रायुक्तं च ॥१६ ॥

16. Further (the knowledge of Brahman) was previously stated (Gita, XVIII-53 and 54).

In Sloka 53, we have, “Becomes fit for Brahman.” In Sloka 54, we have, “Having become Brahman, he obtains supreme devotion unto Me."

Then in Sloka 44 we have “Abhijanati" and "Tattvato Jnatva. i.e., knowing Me in reality.” Then only one will attain perfect realisation of God or oneness and absorption (Visate). Knowledge leads to devotion and devotion leads to Abhijnana, i.e., renewed knowledge or recollected knowledge like the striking and restriking of grains in the act of husking paddy. Such deepened reknowledge leads to pure and strong devotion and ultimately to perfect knowledge or knowing in reality or in essence which leads to perfect God-realisation.

एतेन विकल्पोऽपि प्रयुक्तः॥१७॥

17. By this the alternate theory also is refuted.

By the conclusion that knowledge (Jnana) is merely a limb (Anga) of devotion (Bhakti), the theory that either of them is enough for the attainment of liberation is refuted, because the whole and the part cannot produce one and the same function. The word 'Api' denotes collection. By this it is implied that both devotion and knowledge are not equally necessary for obtaining liberation.

देवभक्तिरितरस्मिन् साहचर्यात् ॥१८॥

18. The word Deva Bhakti refers to the devotion to other gods, as it is used along with (the word Guru).

In Svetasvatara Upanishad it is said, “These are attainments of him who is devoted to the Deva” (VI-23). As the word Deva-Bhakti is used along with the word Guru-Bhakti the former word refers to devotion to the minor deities but not to devotion to the Supreme God, just as in the case of the word “Uluka” which may mean owl or Indra according to its association with other words.

योगस्तभयार्थमपेक्षणात् प्रयाजवत्॥१९॥

19. Again Yoga (concentration of mind) is for the benefit of both (knowledge or Jnana, and devotion or Bhakti), because of its necessity in both as in Prayaja (Yajna).

Just as Prayaja ceremony is an essential portion of both the Vajapeya sacrifice and the Dikshaniya sacrifice, so also Yoga is necessary in both (knowledge and devotion.) Vairagya or dispassion also is necessary for the practice of Jnana and devotion. Even if Yoga is practised for knowledge alone, surely it helps the growth of devotion also. Yoga or concentration of mind is indispensable for doing Karma Yoga or the Yoga of action also.

गोण्या तु समाधिसिद्धिः ॥२०॥

20. Samadhi is attained, however, through secondary devotion (Gauna-Bhakti).

Ishvara-Pranidhana (vide Patanjali's Yoga Sutras 1-23), or self-surrender leads to Samadhi. Pranidhana is not primary devotion but secondary

devotion. Primary devotion or Para Bhakti alone leads to the attainment of God-realisation.

हेया रागत्वादिति चेन्नोत्तमास्पदत्वात् सङ्गवत्॥२१॥

21. If it is said that devotion should be given up as it is of the nature of attachment, (we say) no, for as of companionship, its goal is the Highest.

Only worldly attachments should be avoided as they bind a man to the word. Attachment to God is auspicious. It does not bind a man to the world, whereas it leads to liberation. All company is not to be shunned. Only evil company should be avoided. Good company is desirable. Even so, devotion, though it has the characteristics of attachment, is highly desirable because its goal is the highest.

तदेव कर्मिज्ञानियोगिभ्य आधिक्यशब्दात् ॥२२॥

22. That (devotion) alone (is the highest), because there is the declaration of the superiority (of its followers) to those who follow the path of action (Karma), knowledge (Jnana) and Yoga.

This refers to Gita, VI-46 & 47: “The Yogi is thought to be superior to the ascetics and even superior to men of knowledge (obtained through the study of scriptures); he is also superior to men of action; therefore, do thou become a Yogi, O Arjuna (Gita, VI-46).” “And among all Yogis, he who, full of faith, with his Inner Self merged in Me, worships Me, he is deemed by Me to be the most devout.” (VI-47).

23. Because the superiority is established by means of questions and answers.

प्रश्ननिरूपणाभ्यामाधिक्यसिद्धेः ॥२३॥

This refers to the Gita, XII-1 & 2. Arjuna asked: “Those devotees, who, ever steadfast, thus worship Thee and those also who worship the Imperishable, the Unmanifested—which of them are better-versed in Yoga?” The Lord replied, “Those, who, fixing their mind on Me, worship Me, ever steadfast, and endowed with supreme faith, in My opinion are the best in Yoga."

Questions and answers are indeed the best means of arriving at the real solution of a problem.

नैव श्रद्धा तु साधारण्यात् ॥२४॥

24. Devotion to God is not mere faith because of its general use.

Faith is a common element in all paths. It forms a part of all acts. In the common worldly parlance a man says, "My boss has great faith in me. So he has handed over all the keys to me Devotion to God, on the contrary, is not so.

तस्यां तत्त्वे चानवस्थानात् ॥२५॥

25. If that be the truth, the argument would be fallacious for want of finality.

In the Gita VI-47, we have “And among all the Yogis, he who, full of faith, with his inner Self merged in Me, worships Me, is deemed by Me to be the most devout.” Here if devotion and faith be identical, then devotion in the form of faith would be an accessory of faith. The result would be non-finality, because faith has no accessory. Suppose you have another faith in that faith, this will involve the logical fallacy of Anavastha (regression without end). The Gita Sloka clearly differentiates between faith (Sraddha) and devotion (Bhakti) as in the expression “possessed of faith and devotion.”

ब्रह्मकाण्डं तु भक्तौ तस्यानुज्ञानाय सामान्यात्॥२६॥

26. Brahma-Kanda refers to devotion. On account of a common attribute, viz., its sequence to Karma-Kanda.

Jnana-kanda and Karma-kanda have the power to make known what was unknown before. There can be no injunction for knowledge. Calling the last portion of the Vedas as the Jnana-kanda is a mistake. It must be really named as Brahma-kanda. The object of the Brahma-kanda is devotion to God.

Chapter 2—Part I

Though Bhakti or devotion to God is not the result of any act, yet it depends for its full development upon certain means, i.e., upon knowledge as the internal means (Antaranga Sadhana) and upon the lower kind of devotion as to the external means (Bahiranga Sadhana).

बुद्धिहेतुप्रवृत्तिराविशुद्धरवघातवत्॥२७॥

27. Effort towards the means of obtaining pure intellect (Buddhi) should be continued till the attainment of perfect purity, like the continuous husking of paddy.

Buddhi means definite knowledge about Brahman. Sravana (hearing or the study of scriptures), Manana (reflection), and Nididhyasana (constant meditation), should be continually performed till devotion becomes firm and perfect, till Para Bhakti, supreme devotion is attained.

तडगडाना च ॥ २८ ॥

28. And of their accessories (Angas) also.

Auxiliary means, such as obedience to the preceptor, arguing in accordance with the Vedas, control of mind and senses, must also be vigorously practised. If the parts are defective, the efficiency of the whole cannot be maintained as in the case of the army and the leader.

तामैश्वर्यपरां काश्यपः परत्वात् ॥१९॥

29. Kasyapa thinks that the consciousness which is absorbed in the Majesty of God is the cause of final liberation, because God is the Supreme Being.

The venerable teacher Kasyapa says that the consciousness, when absorbed in the glory and lordliness of the Lord, leads to the attainment of the goal or emancipation.

आत्मे कपरं बादरायणः ॥ ३० ॥

30. Baadarayana thinks that the consciousness which is wholly absorbed in the Atman (the Supreme Soul) is the cause of final liberation.

They know moreover that all is the Atman and they are solely devoted to and absorbed in it”-Brahma Sutras IV-i-3.

उभयपरां शाण्डिल्यः शब्दोपपत्तिभ्याम् ॥३१॥

31. Sandilya thinks that the consciousness, which is absorbed in both (Atman and God) is the cause of final liberation from the authority of the Vedas and valid reasoning.

Sandilya reconciles both the theories by quoting scriptural authority and by proving with cogent reasons. The Chhandogya Upanishad says, “Verily all this is Brahman. Brahman should be realised. Brahman is the Self in the heart. He who has devotion verily reaches Him.” (III-14-i to iv).

"An eternal portion of Myself having become an individual soul in the world of life....”—Gita, XV-7.

वैषम्यादसिद्धमिति चेन्नाभिज्ञानवदवैशिष्ट्यात् ॥३२॥

32. If it is objected that the conclusion does not logically follow because of the mutual contradictory nature (of these two forms of knowledge or of the realisation of God and the realisation of the Self), we say, 'no', there being no contradiction, as in the case of recognition.

If you eliminate Maya and Avidya the Upadhis or limiting adjuncts of Isvara and Jiva respectively, there is unity or identity as in the case of acts of recognition like "Soyam Devadatta—This is that Devadatta."

न च क्लिष्टः परः स्यादनन्तरं विशेषात् ॥३३॥

33. The supreme Atman is not affected with pains and miseries on account of the special state of the soul subsequent to the realisation of the identity of the individual soul and the Atman (the Supreme soul)

When Avidya—the limiting Upadhi of Jiva-is desstroyd through realisation of oneness with Brahman all miseries and, pain, due to the limitations of Jiva disappear. Just as the ether is not affected on account of its subtle nature, so also the subtle Atman is not affected by the pain and miseries.

ऐश्वर्यं तथेति चेन्न स्वाभाव्यात्॥३४॥

34. If it is said that supernatural divine powers will also be like that will have no existence in Him) we say. 'no', because they constitute His very nature.

Pain affects the limited Jiva. Pain is an Upadhi or accidental attribute. It is not present in God. It does not follow from this that the supernatural powers also are not present in Him. Just as heat is the very nature of the fire, so also the divine powers constitute the very nature of the Lord. Just as heat is never absent from fire, because it is its very nature, so also divine powers are never absent from the Lord, because they are His very nature. Just as the brightness of an object is not affected by the dirt on the surface of the mirror, so also the true Majesty of the Lord, though not fully reflected in an impure and dirty mind, is not in any way affected thereby.

अप्रतिसिद्ध परैश्वर्यं तद्भावाच्च नैवमितरेषाम् ॥३५॥

35. The supernatural powers of the Lord are not denied as they are His very nature. That is not so with others.

As soon as the Jiva attains Self-realisation, his Upadhi or limiting adjunct, viz., Avidya comes to an end. But it is not so with the Lord. The powers of the Lord known as Maya never come to an end. The Mayaic power of the Lord is eternal, because the Jivas are infinite in number as well as in nature and the action of the Lord is quite necessary for their worship and devotion and also for the very continuance of their lives in this world.

Isvara is the universal Father. His Sakti, Maya is the universal Mother. All Jivas are His children. He manifests His glory and powers for ever to help and liberate them from their round of births and deaths.

सर्वानृते किमिति चेन्नैवं बुद्ध्यानन्त्यात् ॥३६॥

36. If it is said that on the liberation of every soul. there is no necessity for the powers of the Lord, we say 'not so', because of the infinity of 'Buddhi' (intellect).

Where is the necessity for the powers of the Lord when all Jivas attain liberation? It is not so. Jivas are endless. There cannot come such a time when all Jivas will attain salvation and there will be everywhere void only.

प्रकृत्यन्तरालादवैकार्यं चित्सत्त्वेनानुवर्तमानात् ॥३७॥

37. The Lord is unchangeable, because He works through the medium of 'Prakriti', being ever accompanied by consciousness.

It may be said that the Lord being the cause of creation will be subject to change or transformation like material objects, clay, milk, etc. This is untenable, because Prakriti is the cause of all physical changes and works, subject to the will of the Lord. The Lord Himself cannot undergo any transformation. He who creates through Maya, cannot undergo changes like the creatures of Maya, and cannot be the creation of Maya. Therefore the Lord remains immutable.

तत्प्रतिष्ठा गृहपीठवत् ॥३८॥

38. The phrase "firm basis in Him' is like the phrase 'the seat in a room'.

If Maya is the material cause of all creation, then why is it mentioned in Srutis that "Upon Him all is firmly based." Just as we say that a person is seating himself in a room, though he sits on a chair within the room, so the Sruti says, that all transformation occurs in Mava that rest on the Lord and that the Lord is the Creator of the world though he creates through Maya.

मिथोऽपेक्षणादुभयम्॥३९॥

39. Because of mutual dependence, both Brahman and Maya (or Prakriti) are the cause of creation.

Then it may be said that Maya is the only cause of creation and by mistake only Brahman is said to be the Creator. This is not so. Both Brahman and Maya are the cause. Each depends upon the other.

चेत्यचितोर्न तृतीयम्॥४०॥

40. There is no third entity besides Brahman and Prakriti.

Chit is Brahman. Chetya is Prakriti. There is no knower except Brahman. There is no object of knowledge except Prakriti. Therefore, there is no third entity besides Brahman and Prakriti.

युक्तौ च सम्परायात् ॥४१॥

41. And both are ever united, because both are without beginning.

We have in the Gita, "Know thou that Matter and Soul are without beginning" (XIII-19).

शक्तित्वान्नानृतं वेद्यम्॥४२॥

42. The object of knowledge (Prakriti) is not unreal, because it is His Sakti (power).

Just as heat is inseparable from the fire so also power is inseparable from the Lord. Sakti and Sakta (power and possessor of power) are one. Therefore, Prakriti or Sakti of the Lord is not unreal.

तत्परिशुद्धिश्च गम्या लोकवल्लिङ्गेभ्यः॥४३॥

43. Perfect purity of devotion is to be known from external marks, like that of the love of ordinary men.

Just as we infer love in men from their words. gestures, looks, tears, thrills of joy, etc., so also we can infer devotio to God from external signs.

सम्मानबहमानप्रीतिविरहेतरविचिकित्सामहिमख्यातित
प्राणस्थानतदीयतासर्वतद्भावाप्रतिकूल्यादीनि च स्मरणेभ्यो बाहुल्यात्॥४४॥

44. The marks of devotion to God can be known from remembering the words and acts of great devotees such as honour, great reverence, delight, grief in separation. aversion to everything else, constant singing of the glory of the Lord, preservation of life for His sake only, the feeling that everything belongs to Him alone, the idea that He is all in all, entire absence of opposition to Him and His Will, and the like.

Arjuna honoured Lord Krishna. Ikshvaku showed reverence even to the clouds which had the colour of Lord Krishna. Vidura had delight in the presence of Lord Krishna. The Gopis experienced sorrow in separation from Lord Krishna. Upamanyu had aversion to everything else other than the Lord. Narada is constantly singing Narayana's Name. Hanuman preserved his life for Lord Rama only. Prahlada had the idea that everything belonged to Lord Narayana only. Bhishma had no enmity towards Lord Krishna when He advanced to kill him.

द्वेषादयस्तु नैवम्॥४५॥

45. But hate, etc., are not so.

Anger, jealousy, hatred, greed and other evil qualities will not exist in the devotees of the Lord.

तद्वाक्यशेषात् प्रादुर्भावेष्वपि सा॥४६॥

46. Such supreme devotion is also directed towards the incarnations of God (as is inferable) from the last portion of the sentence.

We have in the Gita, “The worshippers of the Devas go to the Devas, but My devotee comes to Me" (VII-23).

जन्मकर्मविदश्चाजन्मशब्दात् ॥४७॥

47. Sruti declares that freedom from births comes to him who knows the mysteries of births and deeds of the Lord.

This refers to Gita IV-9 which says: "He who thus knows in true light. My divine birth and action, having abandoned the body, is not born again; he comes to Me, O Arjuna.” He who is attached to the Avataras or incarnations of the Lord and worships them, also develops supreme devotion.

तच्च दिव्यं स्वशक्तिमात्रोद्भवात् ॥४८॥

48. That (His incarnation) is divine, as it comes into being only out of His own power (Sakti).

We have in the Gita, “Though I am unborn, of imperishable nature, and though I am the Lord of all beings, yet ruling over My own nature, I am born of My own Maya” (IV-6).

मुख्यं तस्य हि कारुण्यम्॥४९॥

49. His mercy indeed is the chief cause of His incarnation.

Why does the Lord engage Himself in doing actions, though there is no necessity for Him to perform action? His mercy indeed is the chief cause of His incarnation for work.

प्राणित्वात्र विभूतिषु ॥५०॥

50. Devotion to His Vibhutis (manifestations of the powers of the Lord) is not supreme devotion, because they are created beings.

We have in the Gita X-27, “Know Me to be the monarch among men." Devotion and attachment to kings will not lead to liberation.

द्यूतराजसेवयोः प्रतिषेधाच्च ॥५१॥

51. And from the prohibition of attachment to the game of dice and to the service of kings.

In the Sastras these are prohibited under certain circumstances, but nowhere and under no circumstances is the love of God prohibited.

वासुदेवेपिति चैत्राकारमात्रत्वात ॥५२॥

52. If it is said that such prohibition applies to Vaasudeva also, we say 'no' because of the assumption of the form of Vaasudeva by the Lord.

Sri Krishna is the supreme Lord. Himself.

प्रत्यभिज्ञानाच्च ॥५३॥

53. Also because of the recognition of Vaasudeva as Brahman.

Sri Krishna is Supreme Brahman. “The son of Devaki is Brahman; Madhusudana is Brahman" (Narayana Atharvasira Upanishad 4).

वृष्णिषु श्रेष्ट्ये न तत् ॥५४॥

54. His enumeration as the chief of Vrishnis (Gita X-37) is because of His superiority among them.

Such enumeration is only for the purpose of showing that all greatness belongs to God.

एव प्रसिध्देषु च ॥५५॥

55. The same result follows from devotion to all well-known incarnations.

As in the case of Vaasudeva, so devotion to the well-known incarnations such as Rama. Narasimha, etc., or to Siva, leads to liberation.

Chapter 2—Part II

भक्त्या भजनोपसंहाराद्गौण्या परायैतद्धेतुत्वात् ॥५६॥

56 By summing up worship with secondary devotion. because of its being the cause of Supreme devotion.

“Those who worship Me with devotion, are in Me, and I am also in them” Gita, IX-29.

"Always singing of Me and caring for Me and firm in determination, always saluting Me with devotion and ever attached to Me, they worship” Gita, IX-14.

Knowledge and Yoga were said to be the direct or primary causes of devotion. Now the author gives a description of the indirect or secondary causes of devotion.

'Bhaktya' refers to secondary devotion. Singing the Names of the Lord, prostration, etc., are secondary causes of devotion. Secondary (Jnana) devotion removes all obstacles which stand in the way of attaining (Mukhya) devotion

रागार्थप्रकीर्तिसाहचर्याच्चेतरेषाम् ॥५७॥

57. Secondary devotion is the effect of other means, because of the help given by singing the Names of the Lord, etc., in the generation of devotion.

We have in the Gita, "Hrishikesa! In Thy magnificence, rightly the world rejoiceth by hymning Thee” (XI-36).

All these are means for developing the secondary devotion.

अन्तराले तु शेषाः स्युरुपास्यादौ च काण्डत्वात् ॥५८॥

58.The others (accessories of devotion) are in the middle of that which has at its beginning the Upasya (the object of devotion) consisting of various parts.

The accessories to Primary devotion are described in the Gita, IX-13 to 29.

ताभ्य: पावित्र्यमुपक्रमात् ॥५९॥

59. Purity comes from them, as stated in the beginning.

From them, i.e., accessories to primary devotion which are known as secondary devotion, which generate purity by destroying the sins and open the door to the kingdom of God'

“This is the supreme purifier” Gita, IX-2.

तासु प्रधानयोगात् फलाधिक्यमेके॥६०॥

60. Some say that superiority of result follows (from doing the various acts of Kirtan, etc., with devotion) because of the repeated use of that word (devotion) in all those acts.

“He who offereth to Me with devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit, water.” Gita, IX-26.

“Saluting me with devotion” Gita, IX-14.

The repeated use of the word devotion signifies that the accessory acts such as Kirtan, etc., produce greater results when they are performed with sincere devotion.

नाम्नेति जैमिनि: सम्भवात् ६१॥

61. Jaimini says, by name, as it is consistent.

Jaimini's view is that the word devotion is used simply as a name to denote the forms of worship as in 'singing with devotion', 'offering with devotion' and 'saluting with devotion'. He is of opinion that this interpretation removes tautology and that the word does not imply any superiority of result as described in the previous aphorism.

अत्राङ्गःप्रयोगाणां यथाकालसम्भवो गृहादिवत् ॥६२॥

62. There, as regards the practice of the accessory acts such as Kirtan, salutation, etc., the proper time and approximate occasions would be as in the case of materials used in the construction of a house.

The materials in the construction of a house are collected and used, some simultaneously, some at one time and some at another time as they become necessary, even so, the accessory acts of devotion should be practised in proper time and proper circumstances.

ईश्वरतुष्टेरेकोअपि बली ॥६३॥

63. Even if one of these accessories is sufficiently powerful it is capable of pleasing God.

Many accessory acts when performed in a half-hearted and imperfect manner, will not help the aspirant to obtain the Grace

f the Lord, whereas even one whole-hearted and perfect act will enable him to win His Grace.

“Whatever is achieved by meditation in Satya Yuga by sacrifices in the Treta Yuga, by worship in the Dvapara Yuga, is attained in the Kali Yuga by singing the hymns of Kesava."-Brahma Purana.

“Kalau Kesava Kirtanat-In Kali Yuga we attain God-realisation by singing Lord's Name and glory.”

अबन्धोऽर्पणस्य मुखम् ॥६४॥

64. Freedom from bondage, due to the dedication of all fruits of action to the Lord, is the entrance to devotion.

If the fruits of all actions are dedicated to the Lord, the actions will not bind a man. Surrendering the fruit of action purifies the heart and neutralises the fruits of actions. We have in the Gita, “Thus shalt thou be freed from the bonds of actions yielding good and evil fruits” (IX-8). If you follow the path cated by the scriptures, you will never perform evil actions.

Nitya und Naimittika Karmas in accordance with the order of life are good deeds.

ध्याननियमस्तु दृष्टसौकर्यात् ॥६५॥

65. Concentration of mind on the object of meditation is for obtaining its fruits easily.

Meditation is the best amongst the diverse means known as secondary devotion. Meditation develops devotion rapidly and leads to Samadhi easily. There must be regular and systematic practice. “Meditate always on that Narayana as dwelling in the heart of the solar disc, seated on the seat of lotus, with bracelets and ear-rings in the shape of Makara, the sea-fish, with a crown and a necklace; having the body of gold and holding a conch, Chakra or discus, mace and lotus in His hands”-Narada Pancharatra.

तद्यजिः पूजायामितरेषां नैवम् ॥६६॥

66. The root Yaj (to sacrifice) is applied to His worship and not to other acts.

This refers to Gita, IX-25: “Yanti madyajinopi mam.” The root Yaj refers to worship of God and not to Jyotishtoma, etc.

पादोदकं तु पाद्यम व्यापतेः ॥६७ ॥

67. Padodaham means water for washing the feet because of the fault of exclusion (Avyapti).

It may be said that water in which the feet of an image have been immersed is Padodaka. This is not correct as this will exclude the water used for Saligrama which has no feet. Padodaka means water intended for washing the feet of the Lord. This meaning will embrace all.

स्वयमर्पितं ग्राहामविशेषात् ॥६८॥

68. What has been offered by a person to the Lord can be taken by him as there is no prohibition.

The offerings to the Lord can be taken by the offerer himself. It will be beneficial if he eats or wears them. It is not like the gift to another man in which case the donor cannot enjoy again the object that was offered as a gift. “The righteous who eat the remnants of the sacrifices are freed from all sins” Gita, III-13.

निमित्तगुणाव्यपेक्षणादपराधेषु व्यवस्था॥६९॥

63. Rules of expiation are laid down for errors or sins due to carelessness in the use of means and acts of worship.

If a man worships with flower that is unfit for use expiation is necessary. There are thirty-two faults in the worship of the Lord. These faults and the means of expiation are dealt with in detail in Varaha Purana,Chapters 25-36.

पत्रादेर्दानमन्यथा हि वैशिष्ट्यम् ॥७०॥

70. "Offering of leaves, etc.” refers to offerings in general, otherwise, verily, there will be the defect of limited sense.

We must not infer from Gita, IX-26 that only leaves, flowers, fruits and water should be offered to the Lord. Whatever is the dearest, the best and the most agreeable should be offered to Him.

सुकृतजत्वात् परहेतुभावाच्च क्रियासु श्रेयस्यः॥७१॥ .

71. These secondary devotional acts are superior to other acts, because they are the result of good deeds and because they are the cause of primary devotion.

The secondary acts of devotion originate from past virtuous actions. They are certainly superior to other ordinary deeds that are daily performed.

गौणं त्रैविध्यमितरेण स्तुत्यर्थत्वात् साहचर्यम् ॥७२॥

72. The first three kinds of worshippers are secondary; their mention along with the other is for eulogy.

We have in the Gita, VII-16: "Four kinds of virtuous men worship Me, O Arjuna, the distressed, the seeker of knowledge, the seeker of wealth, and the wise, O Lord of the Bharatas." The first three kinds of worshippers are secondary and inferior to the fourth, i.e., the wise (Jnani).

बहिरन्तस्थमुभयमवेष्टिसववत् ॥७३॥

73. Such secondary devotional acts are both along with and without primary devotion, like Aveshti and Sava.

Aveshti sacrifice is a part of Rajasuya. If it is performed separately it produces some results. If it is done as a part of Rajasuya, it causes different results. Even so, singing of hymns, etc., have their own merits when they are performed independently. When they are done as a part of primary devotion, they have distinct results.

स्मृतिकीर्योः कथादेश्चातौ प्रायश्चित्तभावात् ॥७४॥

74. Remembering God, singing of hymns and description of His qualities and Lilas, etc., are laid down as penances for expiation of sins in the case of the distressed (Arta Bhakti).

"Of the various kinds of penances, the constant remembrance of Lord Krishna is the best" — Vishnu Purana II-6-35.

"The singing of His Name is the best means for dissolution of various sins, as fire is the best dissolver of metals, O Maitreya"—Vishnu Purana II-6-29.

भूयसामननुष्ठितिरिति चेदाप्रयाणमुपसंहारान्महत्स्वपि॥७५॥

If it is objected that there would be the non-observance of severe austerities in the case of heinous sins, we reply, not so, because of its constant performance till death.

Sankirtan or singing of the Names of the Lord will have to be ceaselessly done throughout the life.

लध्वपि भक्ताधिकारे महत्क्षेपकमपरसर्वहानात् ॥७६॥

76. In the case of the devotee, an act of devotion even though it be slight, is capable of destroying great sins, because of its power of doing away with all other sins.

We have in the Gita “Abandoning all duties, taking refuge in Me alone; I will liberate thee from all sins; grieve not" —XVIII-66 and IX-30 & 31.

"Though extremely sinful he who meditates on the Eternal even for a moment becomes again an ascetic of great purity.” "The most heinous sins of men that lead to the torment of hell, disappear immediately if they remember the Lord even for a moment" — Vishnu Purana VI-7-10.

तत्स्थानत्वादनन्यधर्मः खले बालीवत् ॥७७॥

77. Because it (devotion) occupies the place of expiatory atonement, it serves the self-same purpose like the post in a threshing floor.

The Asvalayana Srauta Sutra says, “The post of a floor becomes a sacrificial post.” Here the post of a threshing floor is enjoined to be used as a sacrificial post for tying beasts. But the other directions for a sacrificial post, viz., that it should be octagonal in shape, etc., are not applicable. Similarly the directions regarding expiation or atonement such as shaving the hairs of the body, cutting the nails, etc., are not applicable here.

(Prayas is meditation with self-effacement and Chitta means firmness. Therefore Prayaschitta is that which is accompanied with meditation and self-effacement and with firmness).

आनिन्द्ययोन्यधिक्रियते पारम्पर्या सामान्यवत् ॥७८॥

78. Every man, even down to the lowest born, has equal right to follow the path of devotion, as it is taught by successive authorities, like all other objects which are common to all.

There is equality of the rights for the highest and the lowest class. People of high caste get through the Srutis (Vedas) what females and the Sudras get through Smritis, Itihasas and Puranas. The knowledge which the latter acquires has the Srutis for its source. Ahimsa is common to the highest and

the lowest class of people. So is devotion. Even the greatest sinners are entitled to supreme devotion.

अतो हाविपक्वभावनामपि तल्लोके॥७९॥

79. Therefore, indeed, by those whose devotion has not become perfect, acts for the attainment of perfect devotion must be performed in the Lord's abode.

They will have to perform actions in Sveta Dvipa, the abode of the Lord, for the attainment of perfect devotion, vide Mahabharata, Santi Parva, Moksha Dharma 338-27 & 28.

क्रमैकगत्युपपत्तेस्तु॥८॥

80. But the reaching of the goal is gradual, as has been clearly shown.

Those who have developed supreme devotion directly reach the Lord. Others go through the Aditya Mandala (Sun's orb) and gradually attain the Lord. Those who are not endowed with perfect devotion attain emancipation by gradual process.

उत्क्रान्तिस्मृतिवाक्यशेषाच्च ॥८१॥

81. Gradual progress is declared by the concluding portion of the Smriti.

Vide Gita, VIII-10 to 24: “Uttering the one-syllabled OM, Brahman, and remembering Me, he who dearts, leaving the body, attains the Supreme Goal.” “Fire light day time, the brighter fortnight, the six-months of northern path of the sun-then departing, men who know Brahman, go to Brahman.”

महापातकीनां स्वांतों ॥८२॥

82. The greatest sinners are entitled to practise the devotion of the distressed (Arta Bhakti).

They have a right to the highest forms of devotion after they are purified.

सैकान्तभावो गीतार्थप्रत्यभिज्ञानात ॥८३॥

83. Primary devotion is perfect devotedness, as appears from the recognition of the purpose of the Gita.

The devotee who is endowed with primary or supreme devotion has single-hearted devotion unto the Lord.

परां कृत्वैव सर्नेषां तथा ह्याह॥८४॥

84. By performing primary or supreme devotion, emancipation comes to all. Thus says the Lord.

We have in the Gita, XVIII-68, “He who with supreme devotion to Me, will teach this supreme secret to My devotees, shall doubtless come to Me." Primary or supreme devotion leads to emancipation.

Chapter 3—Part I

This chapter deals with the object of devotion.

भजनीयेनाद्वितीयमिदं कृत्स्नस्य तत्स्वरूपत्वात्॥८५॥

85. This devotion is not different from the object of devotion as the whole of it has the same essential form as that.

Knowledge is existence. Knowledge is Brahman. Objects have no independent existence of their own. Soul, devotion and God, i.e., knower, knowledge and knowable are really one and the same.

तच्छक्तिर्माया जडसामान्यात्॥८६॥

86. Maya is His power. It is insentient.

The power of Brahman is called as Maya because of the variety of its effects. The existence of Brahman follows from the knowledge of the existence of effects.

व्याकत्वाद्याप्यानाम्॥८७॥

87. The characteristics of the pervaded are derived from the pervasive.

The Lord is the cause of everything. He is the very substratum of everything. If you have the knowledge of the universal, you can very easily attain the knowledge of the individual (or particular). If you have knowledge of God, you can have knowledge of everything. Knowledge of the first Cause of all causes or Brahman is the sole means of emancipation

न प्राणिबुद्धिभ्योऽसम्भवात् ॥८८॥

88. (The higher beings such as Deva Rishis) have not come out of human intelligence, because it is impossible.

So there must be God, who is the Creator.

निर्मायोच्चावचं श्रुतीश्च निर्मिमीते पितृवत्॥८९॥

89. Having created the higher and the lower orders of beings, He created the Vedas, like a father.

Just as a father gives good advice to his sons, so also the Lord created the Vedas for the good of all beings.

मिश्रोपदेशान्नेति चेन्न स्वल्पत्वात् ॥९०॥

90. If it is said that the above is not the fact, on account of the mixed nature of the instructions, we reply. 'no,' because they are very few.

It may be objected that the Lord cannot be as kind as a father, because His precepts contain sacrifice of life which involves sins. It is not so.

The instructions are few only. The sacrifices produce great happiness, though the slaughter of animals causes very little sorrow. "Ma himsyat sarva bhutani-do not harm any animal" is a fundamental precept. It is only those who kill animals to satisfy their palate that go to hell. Hence the author of these precepts is not unkind.

फलमस्वाद्बादरायणो दृष्टत्वात् ॥९१॥

91. The fruit of actions comes from Him, says Baadarayana, because such is the result of observation.

Just as the acts of the soldiers in the war and their results go to the king, so also the acts in the sacrifices and their results go to the Lord only. Therefore, perform all acts to propitiate the Lord. Do actions for His sake only. Have the Lord as your supreme goal. Surrender the actions and their fruits unto the Lord (Br. Sutras: 1-1-2).

व्युत्क्रमादप्ययस्तथा दृष्टम् ॥९२॥

92. Dissolution takes place in the reverse order.

The involution of the elements and the universe occurs in the reverse order to the order of its evolution. During evolution, air comes out of ether, fire from air, water from fire, earth from water. During dissolution earth is merged in water, water in fire, fire in air and air in ether.

Chapter 3—Part II

Liberation is the attainment of the state of Brahman by the Jiva, the individual soul. In this section the nature of worship, the fitness of the Jiva to rise to the state of divinity and how devotion leads to liberation, are dealt with.

तदैक्यं नानात्वैकत्वमुपाधियोगहानादादित्यवत् ॥९३॥

93. That (Brahman) is oneness. Diversity or unity appears on account of the presence or the absence of Upadhis or limitations, as in the case of the sun.

We have in the Gita, “Just as the one Sun illumines the whole world, so also the Lord of the field, illumines the whole world, O Bharata” (XIII-33).

Just as the Sun which appears to be many on account of the Upadhis or limitations, i.e., mirrors, shines as one when the mirrors are removed, so also Brahman shines as one and is realised so when the Upadhi of Jiva, i.e., Avidya, the limitation falsely created by the mind is removed. पृथगिति **चेन्न परेणासम्बन्धात् प्रकाशानाम्॥९४॥**

94. If it is said that it is different, we say, 'no,' because then there would be want of relationship between the manifested objects and the Lord. .

Created beings cannot be in God, if they are not like Him. A light cannot be revealed by another light, though the covering is removed. So, the mind cannot reveal the Supreme Atman which is self-effulgent. The Supreme Atman is not in need of help from any other principle. It is self-existent. It is in all and shines in all.

न विकारिणस्तु करणविकारात्॥१५॥

95. The souls are not subject to change. Change is in the senses.

When a man says, 'I know', 'I am happy', it is not that Atman knows and Atman is happy. It is the ego that knows and feels through the mind. Atman is always the unchanging witness.The knowledge comes from sense-impressions and senses. There is no mind in deep sleep. So there is no sense of 'I

अनन्यभक्त्या तद्बुद्धिर्बुद्धिलयादत्यन्तम्॥९६॥

96. From the complete disappearance of the intellect through undivided devotion, that knowledge dawns.

We have in the Gita, “That Highest Purusha, O Partha, is attainable by unswerving devotion to Him alone within whom all beings dwell, by whom all this is pervaded” (VIII-22).

Through supreme devotion, Buddhi (intellect) finally disappears altogether and then realisation of the Self takes place. Realisation of the Self is the attainment of knowledge of Brahman or emancipation in the form of the attainment of eternal bliss which is Brahman. Just as camphor is absorbed in the fire, so also the mind is absorbed in Brahman through undivided devotion.

आयुश्चिरमितरेषां तु हानिरनास्पदत्वात् ॥९७॥

97. Life is prolonged but merit and sin disappear in the case of the man of perfect devotion because of the absence of objects of enjoyment.

All righteousness and sins vanish when one attains supreme devotion because the intellect disappears and the objects of enjoyment are absent. Life will last till Prarabdha Karma is exhausted. He is in a state of bliss. Pleasure and pain, merit and sin cannot touch him. He is a Jivanmukta. He

is liberated while living. All Karmas with their generating forces are burnt in toto. The mind is absorbed in Brahman.

ससृतिरेषामभक्तिः स्यान्नाज्ञानात् कारणासिद्धेः॥९८॥

Rebirths and deaths originate from want of devotion and not from want of knowledge, the former alone being inconsistent with the cause (of births and deaths).The births and deaths of Jiva are attributed to lack of devotion. Births and deaths cease for ever when one attains perfect or supreme devotion. Sandilya Rishi has placed Bhakti on a higher level than Jnana.

त्रीण्येषां नेत्राणि शब्दलिङ्गाक्षभेदाद्रुद्रवत्॥९९॥

99. To all beings, there are three eyes, as in the case of Rudra (Siva), viz., the Vedas, the symbol and the senses.

There are three eyes, i.e., three means of attaining knowledge, i.e., three sorts of proof (Pramana) to ascertain the true nature of objects. Sabda is the word or the scripture. Through symbol we get inference. Through the senses we get direct perception.

आविस्तिरोभावा विकाराःस्युः क्रियाफलसंयोगात् ॥१०॥

100. Manifestations and dissolutions are modifications due to the junction of actions with their effects.

Manifestation is appearance or origination of things or objects. Dissolution is disappearance or destruction of things or objects. God is the creator, preserver and destroyer of the Universe. Brahma is His creative aspect. Vishnu is His preservative aspect. Rudra is His destructive aspect. Supreme devotion to the Lord leads to final emancipation through the realisation of oneness or unity with Brahman.

May Lord Krishna, the bestower of joy, peace, bliss and immortality, ever dwell in your hearts! May His blessings be upon you all!!

Thus end the Sandilya Bhakti Sutras.

Hari Om Tat Sat

Om Santi! Santi!! Santi!!!

Chapter VI

AUXILIARIES TO BHAKTI

1. Importance of Guru Bhakti

Dhyana mulam gurormurtih puja mulam guror padam, Mantra mulam guror-vakyam moksha mulam gurorkripa.

Guru's form is the basis of meditation. His Feet are the root of worship. His words are the source of Mantra and His Grace is the root cause of Moksha (salvation).

Guru is one who has full Self-illumination and who can remove the veil of ignorance in deluded Jivas. Guru, Truth, Brahman, Isvara, Atman, God, OM are all one. So long as there is a world there are Gurus and Vedas to guide the struggling souls in the path of Self-realisation. The number of realised souls may be less in the Iron Age when compared with the Satyayuga, but they are always present to help the aspirants. They are always searching for the proper Adhikaris or qualified aspirants.

Guru is Brahman Himself. Guru is Isvara. Guru is God. A word from him is a word from God. He need not teach anything. Even his presence or company is elevating, inspiring and stirring. His very company itself is Self-illumination. Living in his company is spiritual education. That which comes out of his lips is all Vedas or gospel Truth. His very life is an embodiment of Vedas. Guru is your guide or spiritual preceptor, your real father, mother, brother, relative and intimate friend. He is an embodiment of mercy and love.

His tender smile radiates light, bliss, joy, knowledge and peace. He is a blessing to the suffering humanity. Whatever he says is Upanishadic teaching. He knows the spiritual path. He knows the pitfalls and snares on the way. He gives timely warning to the students. He showers his grace on them. All agonies, miseries, tribulations, taints of worldlines, etc., vanish in his mere presence.

It is he who transmutes the little Jivahood into great Brahmanhood. It is he who overhauls the old wrong vicious Samskaras of aspirants and awakens them to the attainment of the Knowledge of Self. It is he who uplifts the Jivas from the quagmire of body and Samsara, removes the veil of Avidya,

all doubts, Moha, fear, etc., awakens the Kundalini and opens the inner eye of intuition.

You will find in the Gita: “Learn thou this by discipleship. by enquiry and by service. The wise, the seers of the essence of things, will instruct thee in wisdom” (IV-34).

The Guru must not only be a Bahmasrotriya but a Brahmanishta as well. Mere study of books cannot make one a Guru. One who has studied the Vedas and who has direct Knowledge of the Atman through Anubhava can only be enrolled as a Guru. If you find peace in the presence of a Mahatma, and if your doubts are removed in his presence, you can take him as your Guru. When the Guru gives Mantra to his disciples, he gives it with his own power and Sattvic Bhava.

Just as water is moving in a river so also Jnana and Bhakti are ever flowing from him. A thirsty man only drinks the water. A thirsty aspirant who has implicit faith in his Guru and who is very eager to imbibe his teachings, can only drink the nectar from him. The student can imbibe from his Guru in proportion to the intensity and degree of his faith in him.

The Guru tests the students in various ways. Some students misunderstand him and lose their faith in him. Hence they are not benefited. Those who stand the tests, boldly come out successful in the end.

The periodical examinations in the Adhyatmic University of sages are very stiff indeed. In days of yore the tests were very severe. Once, Gorakhnath asked some of his students to climb up a tall tree and throw themselves head downwards on a very sharp trident (Trisula). Many faithless students kept quiet. But one faithful student at once climbed up the tree with lightning speed and hurled himself downwards. He was protected by the invisible hand of Gorakhnath. He Had immediate Self-realisation. He had no Dehaadhyasa, wrong identification with his body. The other faithful students had strong Moha or attachment for their bodies.

Once Guru Govind Singh tested his students. He said: “My dear disciples! If you have real devotion towards me, let six of you come forward and give me your heads. Then we can have success in our attempt.” Two faithful disciples offered their heads. Guru Govind Singh took them inside the camp and cut off the heads of two goats instead.

There is a good deal of debate and controversy amongst many people over the matter of necessity of a Guru. Some assert with vehemence and force that a preceptor is not at all necessary for Self-realisation and spiritual advancement, and that one can have spiritual progress and Self-illumination through his own efforts alone. They quote various passages from the scriptures and assign arguments and reasonings to support them. Others boldly hold that no spiritual progress in a man, however intelligent he may be, however hard he may attempt and struggle in the spiritual path, can be possible unless he gets the benign grace and direct guidance of a spiritual preceptor.

Now open your eyes and watch carefully what is actually going on in this world around us in various fields of activity. Even a cook needs a teacher. He serves under a senior cook for some years. He obeys him implicitly. He pleases his teacher in all possible ways. He thus learns the technique of cooking. He gets knowledge through the grace of a senior cook, his teacher. A junior lawyer wants the help and guidance of a senior advocate. Students of mathematics and medicine need the help and guidance of a learned professor. It is universally admitted that an efficient teacher is needed in all branches of knowledge in this physical plane, and that physical, mental, moral and spiritual culture and growth can only be had through the help and guidance of competent teachers or masters. This is an universal inexorable law of nature. Why then do you deny friend, the application of this universally-accepted law in the realm of spirituality alone?

Spiritual knowledge is a matter of Guruparampara. It is handed down from Guru to his disciple. Study Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. You will have a comprehensive understanding of this truth. Gaudapadacharya imparted Self-knowledge to his disciple Govindacharya, Govindacharya to his disciple Sankaracharya, and Sankaracharya to his disciple Suresvaracharya.

Matsyendranath imparted knowledge to his disciple Gorakhnath, Gorakhnath to Nivrittinath. and Nivrittinath to Jnanadeva. Totapuri imparted knowledge to Sri Ramakrishna and Ramakrishna to Swami Vivekananda. It was Ashtavakra who moulded the life of Raja Janaka. It was Gorakhnath who shaped the spiritual destiny of Raja Bhartrihari. It was Lord Krishna who made Arjuna and Uddhava get themselves established in the spiritual path, when their minds were in an unsettled state.

Some aspirants do meditation for some years independently. Later on they feel actually the necessity for a Guru. They come across some obstacles in the way. They do not know how to proceed further, how to obviate the impediments or the stumbling-blocks. They then begin to search for a Guru.

The student and the teacher should live together as father and a devoted son with extreme sincerity and devotion. The aspirant should have an eager receptive attitude to imbibe the teachings of the master. Then only the aspirant will be spiritually benefited. Otherwise there is not the least hope of the spiritual uplift of the aspirant and complete regeneration of his old Asuric nature.

You are all aware how devoted was the hunter Ekalavya towards his Guru, Dronacharya. That is the reason why he became an expert in archery. He served and worshipped the

image only. Once Sankaracharya wanted to test the devotion of his disciple Padmapada. The river Kaveri was in full floods. Sankara was standing on the banks of the river. Padmapada was standing on the other bank. Sankara beckoned Padmapada to come to him immediately. There was no boat even. Padmapada not caring for his life, at once jumped into the river. He did not know ending on the other bank. Sankara beckoned Pad e to him immediately. There was no boat even. Padmanada swimming. This is real devotion. Through the grace of Sankara, Padmapada was walking quite easily on the water. At Coch step a lotus flower appeared and hence his name Padmapada (lotus in the feet).

There is no hope of salvation for the deluded soul without the healing, magnetic touch, and guidance of a spiritual preceptor. It is Guru only who can effect a radical change in the angle of vision of men and raise them to sublime, transcendental heights of eternal life in the Atman with Cosmic Consciousness, Divine Glory, Atmic effulgence and splendour.

2 . Bhakti Yoga in a Nutshell

Select an Ishta Devata either Siva, Rama, Krishna, Vishnu, Dattatreya, Gayatri or Sakti according to the advice of your Guru or your own inclination or on consultation with a good astrologer who will select the Deity according to your planetary influence. Get the proper Mantra also like

Om Namah Sivaya, Om Namo Narayanaya, Om Namo Bhagavate Vaasudevaya, Om Sri Ram Jaya Ram Jaya Jaya Ram, etc. Keep a photo of the particular deity in front of you in the meditation room. For six months practise Tratak (steady gazing) on the picture from fifteen seconds to fifteen minutes. See the picture carefully with concentration for fifteen minutes without winking till tears flow profusely. Study constantly Bhagavata, Ramayana, Narada Bhakti Sutras and Sandilya Sutras. Live for one year in Ayodhya, Mathura, Pandharpur, Rishikesh or any other holy place. Pass through the course of Nava Vidha Bhakti. Repeat your Guru Mantra constantly. Have sleep for only three hours. Select a Bhava suitable for you, either Madhurya, sakhya Dasya or Vatsalya. Make ungrudging, unreserved, true, perfect self-surrender to God. Do Antarika prayer from the bottom of your heart. Prayer can move mountains. Prayer can reach a realm wherein reason can hardly enter.

Have Eka Nishta (devotion to one ideal). The Bhakti must be Ananya, Avyabhicharini (unwavering, one-pointed, single-minded devotion). Develop slowly Anurag, Prem, Preethi, Viraha (pain of separation from God) Bhava and Mahabhava. In Mahabhava the devotee is unconscious of his body and the world and is absolutely merged in God or Ishtam. From Apara or lower Bhakti, the devotee passes on to Para or Abheda Bhakti. A devotee gets Krama Mukti or progressive emancipation after passing through Salokya, Samipya, Sarupya and Sayujya Mukti.

"Dadami buiddhiyogam tam yena mamupadanti te—I give the Yoga of discrimination by which they come unto Me" Gita X-10.

After enjoying the lower Mukti, a devotee finally attains Kaivalya Moksha, the same state as that of a Jnani. An earnest Sadhaka with Utsaha (perseverance) can realise within 2 or 3 years. I assure you emphatically. I assure you sincerely and boldly. Make a sincere effort, and watch the results.

Follow Lord Krishna's instructions in the Gita as described in the terms Macchitta, Yukta, Matpara.

3. Prema Yoga

Prem is intense, selfless, pure love to the Lord. Prem is concentrated love. Prem brings the devotee face to face with the Lord. Bhakti culminates in Prem. Prem is pure nectar. Prem destroys pains, sorrows and makes one

immortal and blissful and peaceful. It is very difficult to describe the nature of Prem. You will have to experience it yourself. Cultivate it through Japa, Smarana, Kirtan, Satsanga, service of devotees and study of Ramayana, Bhagavata, etc.

Repetition of Stotras or hymns will elevate your mind and inspire you. It will keep your mind in tune with the Lord. It will instil in your heart joy, peace and bliss. Sing the hymns daily and obtain the grace of the Lord. Dwell in Him always.

Of the various kinds of penances in the form of action or austerity, the constant remembrance of Krishna is the best. (Vishnu Purana 11-6 134-135).

The singing of His Name is the best means for dissolution of various sins, as fire is the best dissolver of metals. (Vishnu Purana VI-7-9).

The most heinous sins of men disappear immediately if they remember the Lord even for a moment. (Vishnu Purana VI-8-10).

That man who does not repeat Lord's Name lives in vain. It is better to die than to live without His Name.

Educate your eyes to see God in all faces, to behold the Divine form in all beings. Educate your ears to hear the sweet melodious Kirtans of Lord Hari. Educate your tongue to sing the praise of the Lord, and to utter pleasant, loving and truthful words. Educate your hands to do charity and serve the poor. Educate your mind to be always cheerful and calm, and to think of Him alone. This is the true path to develop Prem.

The search for the highest Truth, a little meditation on the Ishtar?: in the early morning hours, a well-regulated life, remembrance of the immortal nature of God, and an attempt to feel His presence in all forms in your private and public life will give a balance and rhythm to your life and inner spiritual strength and courage.

Have ceaseless devotion to Truth. Be ready to sacrifice all for it. You will develop a strong will. You will become fearless. You will draw immense strength and courage from Him who is the Indweller of all beings. You will attain God-realisation.

There is only one Truth, God, and there is nothing else. This world is His manifestation. All activities, happenings and doings are His. All is He. This world is ephemeral and a passing show, a phenomena only for a time. There is no individual existence. The individuality is simply imaginary and an ignorant condition of the mind.

To define God is to deny God. You can give definition of a finite object only. How can you define the limitless or Infinite Being who is the source and ultimate cause for everything? If you define God you are limiting the limitless one, you are confining Him within the concept of mind. God is beyond the reach of gross mind, but He can be realised through meditation with a pure, subtle and one-pointed mind.

Purity of food leads to purity of mind. This implies that all the objects which are grasped by the senses must be pure. The ears should hear sublime utterances of Gita, Ramayana, Bhagavata, and Kirtan of Hari. Let your clothing be Sattvic or pure. Let your speech be pure. Let your companions be Sattvic persons. Let the books you study be pure. Let the place be Sattvic. Let the meditation room be decorated with Sattvic pictures of the Lord. Then only you will attain soon God-consciousness. You will find in the peace chant also: "O gods, may we with our ears hear what is auspicious; O ye, fit to be worshipped, may we with our eyes see what is auspicious."

You have to make your offerings to the Lord with the same mental attitude which Bhilini Sabari had. You have to call the Lord with the same Bhava which Draupadi had when she called the Lord of Dvaraka, or when Gajendra called Lord Hari. Develop this Bhava. You will have the Darshan of the Lord immediately.

Without love man's life is empty. Without love man lives in vain. Love is vital. It is all-pervading. Love is a great power. Love is the sap of life. Give love. It shall be given unto you. Cultivate this love through service, Japa, Satsanga and meditation.

Strive ceaselessly to live in God through Japa, Kirtan, service of the poor and meditation. Then only you will be able to conquer Time or Death.

God is always with you. He will protect and deliver you. Take refuge in Him. His blessings will overflow in your life and transform your mind and body. Develop your consciousness of spiritual things. Make a special effort daily

to exercise control over your thoughts, words and actions. Feel His presence in your room. Pray and meditate daily.

Friend! For a little while, concentrate thy attention and fix thy mind on the lndweller of your heart. Abandon all worldly pleasures. Take to the path which is trodden by the righteous. Live on milk and fruits for a week. Endure cold and heat, hunger and thirst. Do not injure any creature to the slightest degree. Live a contented life. Regard censure and applause equally. Derive happiness from thy soul.

If you get up in Brahmamuhurta at 4 a.m., you will have a clear and calm mind. There is a spiritual influence and mysterious silence in the early morning hours. All saints and Yogis practise meditation at this period and send their spiritual vibrations to the whole world. You will be highly benefited by their vibrations if you start your prayer, Japa and meditation at this period. You need not exert. The meditative state of mind will come by itself.

Always give the best things, best food, best fruits, best milk, best clothes to friends, neighbours, strangers, guests and servants. You will derive immense joy, strength and happiness. Put this into practice and realise the benefits. You will develop Prem.

Tend the sick. Console the distressed. Live in God. Preach the gospel of love. Lead a life of self-sacrifice and service. Be pious and pure. This will lead you to the attainment of God-consciousness.

Sri Krishna says .to Uddhava: "Giving no attention to people who laugh in ridicule, forgetting the body and insensible to shame, one should fall prostrate on the ground and bow to all beings down even to the dog, the Chandala, the cow and the ass" Doing prostrations to others makes a man humble. If he entertains Narayana-bhava when he does prostrations, this will help him to realise that whatever he sees is God, that there is nothing but God, that the manifestation is the Virat aspect of Brahman. Doing prostrations to others with Narayana-bhava is a great help for developing devotion. Do mental prostration to a cow, or an ass, or a dog, and feel that you are doing prostration to Lord Hari. All living creatures, all objects are forms of Hari only.

May you all attain God-consciousness through the practice of Prema Yoga. May your heart be filled with Prem for the Lord. May the blessings of the

Lord be upon you all. May you all shine as Bhagavatas, singing Lord's Name, disseminating Bhagavad Prem and radiating joy, peace and bliss everywhere!

4. Puja or Worship

Puja is worship of the Lord. This is Upasana which helps the devotee to sit near the Lord or to commune with Him. It purifies the heart and steadies the mind. It fills the mind with Suddha Bhava and Prem or pure love for the Lord. It gradually transmutes man into a divine being.

Idol or Murti (Vigraha), sun, fire, water, Ganga, Saligram, Linga are all symbols or Pratikas of God which helps the aspirants to attain one-pointedness of mind and purity of heart. A symbol is absolutely indispensable for fixing the mind. The Christians also have got the symbol 'cross.' A gross mind needs a concrete symbol as a prop or Alambana, a subtle mind requires an abstract symbol. Even a Vedantin has the symbol OM for fixing the wandering mind. In the beginning, concentration or meditation is not possible without a symbol.

The mind is disciplined in the beginning by fixing it on a concrete object or symbol. When it is rendered steady and subtle, it can be fixed later on, on an abstract idea such as Aham-Brahma-Asmi.

The devotee superimposes on the concrete idol, the Lord and His attributes. He does Shodasopachara for the idol, the sixteen kinds of paying respects or service to the Lord such as offering water for washing the feet, seat, bath, clothes, sandal paste, flowers, burning incense, waving of lights and camphor, etc. The wandering mind is fixed now in this form of worship. The aspirant gradually feels the nearness of the Lord. He attains purity of heart and slowly annihilates his egoism.

He who has done Puja with flowers and other articles of worship for some time can take to mental worship. In mental Puja the devotee offers mentally all offerings to the Lord. This is advanced form of worship. The devotee says unto the Lord: "O Lord! I am Thine. All is Thine. Thy Will be done. Thou art everything. Thou doest everything. Thou art just. I am instrument in Thy hands. I am nothing. I can do nothing. I have nothing". Thus he destroys his egoism, and does self-surrender to the Lord.

Even in worshipping a small idol he has to repeat the Purusha-sukta and to think of the Virat Purusha with countless heads, countless eyes, countless hands who extends beyond the universe also and of the Lord or the Atman who dwells in the hearts of all beings.

The aspirant gradually begins to feel that the Lord he worships is in the idol, in the hearts of all creatures, and in all the names and forms of this universe. He begins to feel His presence everywhere.

He repeats the Mantra of the Lord during worship and touches his heart, his head, tuft of hair, arms and hands. There is Chaitanya in every letter of the Mantra. Through repetition of the Mantra and touching the parts of the body with repetition of the parts of the Mantra, the aspirant is gradually divinised. There is spiritual awakening. Spiritual currents are generated. Tamas and Rajas are destroyed. He is filled with pure Sattva. He becomes identical with the object of worship. He attains the same world of or proximity with, or the same form of, or absorption into the Lord.

For a Bhakta or sage there is no such thing as Jada or insentient matter. Everything is Vaasudeva or Chaitanya—Vaasudevah sarvam-iti. The devotee beholds actually the Lord in the idol. Narsi Mehta was put to the test by a king. The king said, "O Narsi! if you are a sincere devotee of Lord Krishna Himself, let this idol move." According to the prayer of Narsi Mehta the idol moved. The sacred bull Nandi before Siva's idol took the food offered by Tulasidas. The Murti played with Mira Bai. It was full of life and Chaitanya for her.

How sublime is Hindu philosophy and Hindu mode of worship! It does not stop or end with worship of idol alone. The Sadhaka is taken step by step to higher stages of devotion and Samadhi or communion through the worship of the idol. Though he worships the idol, he has to keep before his mental eye the all-pervading Lord. He has to feel His presence in his heart and all objects also. The ways and rules of worship, Puja Vidhi and the secrets of worship that are described in the Hindu scriptures are scientifically accurate and highly rational. It is only ignorant people who have not studied the scriptures, who have not associated with the devotees and great souls vilify worship of idols or Murtis.

The aspirant who worships the idol in the beginning beholds the Lord everywhere and develops Para-bhakti. From Vidhi-bhakti he passes on to

Ragatmika-bhkti or Prema-bhakti. He beholds the whole world as the Lord. The ideas of good and bad, right and wrong, vanish. He sees the Lord in a rogue, dacoit, cobra, scorpion, ant, dog, tree, log of wood, block of stone, sun, moon, stars, fire, water, earth, etc. His vision or experience baffles description. Glory to such exalted Bhaktas who are veritable Gods on earth, who live to lift others from the quagmire of Samsara and save them from the clutches of death!

Tulasidas realised the all-pervading essence. He had cosmic consciousness. He communed with the all-pervading formless Lord. And yet his passion for Lord Rama with bow in His hand did not vanish. When he had been to Vrindavan and saw the Murti of Lord Krishna with flute in His hands, he said, "I will not bow my head to this form". At once Lord Krishna's form assumed the form of Lord Rama. Then only he bowed his head. Tukaram also had the same cosmic experience as that of Tulasidas. He sings in his Abhanga "I see my Lord all-pervading, just as sweetness pervades' the sugar cane" and yet he always speaks of his Lord Vittala of Pandharpur with His hands on the hips. Mira also realised her identity, with the all-pervading Krishna and yet she was not tired of repeating again and again, "My Giridhar Nagar." Madhusudana Swami who had Advaitic realisation, who beheld oneness of the Self, who had Advaitic Bhava was intensely attached to the form of Lord Krishna with flute in His hands.

From the above facts we can clearly infer that one can realise God through worship of Murti or idol, that the worship of the Lord in Saguna form is a great aid for Vedantic realisation also and for the realisation of the Lord in His all-pervading formless aspect, and that the worship of the Murti is very essential for the purpose of concentration and meditation in the beginning, and that such a worship is not in any way a hindrance to the attainment of God-consciousness and those who vehemently attack Murti Puja are groping in extreme darkness and ignorance and they have no real knowledge of Puja and worship, and that they enter into unnecessary, vain debates and discussion against Murti Puja to show that they are learned persons and that they have not done any real Sadhana at all. They are persons who have made idle talking and tall talk as their habit and profession. They have ruined themselves. They have unsettled the minds of countless persons and mined them also. The whole world worships symbols and Murtis only in some form or other. When the devotee advances in meditation, the form melts in the formless and he becomes one with the formless essence.

Empty vessels only make such sound. A practical man who does meditation and worship, who is full of knowledge and real devotion, keeps always silence. He influences and teaches others through silence. He only knows whether a Murti is necessary in the beginning for concentration or not.

However intellectual one may be, he cannot concentrate without the help of some symbol in the beginning. An intellectual and learned person on account of his pride and vanity only says, "I do not like a Murti. I do not wish to concentrate on a form." He cannot concentrate on the formless one. He thinks that people will laugh at him when they come to know that he is meditating on a form. He never does any meditation on the formless one. He simply talks and argues and poses. He wastes his life in unnecessary discussions only. An ounce of practice is better than tons of theories. Intellect is a hindrance in the vast majority of intellectual persons. They say that the existence of Brahman is a guess work, Samadhi is a bluff of the mind and Self-realisation is an imagination of the Vedantins. Deluded souls! They are steeped in ignorance. They are carried away by their secular knowledge which is mere husk when compared to the knowledge of the Self. There is no hope of salvation for such people. First their wrong Samskaras should be flushed by good Samskaras through Satsanga. Then only they will realise their mistakes. May the Lord bestow on them clear understanding and thirsting for real knowledge!

May you all enjoy the eternal bliss of the Innermost Selfl?

5. Prasad Mahima

(Greatness of Prasad)

Prasad is that which gives Peace. During Kirtan, worship, Puja, Havan and Arati, almond, milk, sweets, fruits are offered to the Lord. Puja is done with Bael leaves, flowers, Tulasi, Vibhuti and these are given as Prasad from the Lord. They are charged with mysterious powers by the chanting of Mantras during Puja and Havan.

Prasad is a great purifier, Prasad is a panacea. Prasad is a spiritual elixir. Prasad is the grace of the Lord. Prasad is an embodiment of Sakti. Prasad is Divinity in manifestation. Many sincere aspirants get wonderful experiences from Prasad alone. Many incurable diseases are cured.

Prasad energises, vivifies, invigorates and infuses devotion. It should be taken with great faith.

Those who are brought up in modern education and culture have forgotten all about the glory of Prasad. This is a serious mistake.

Live for a week in Vrindavan, Pandharpur or Benares. You will realise the glory and miraculous effects of Prasad. Prasad bestows good health, long life, peace and prosperity to all Glory to Prasad, the bestower of Peace and Bliss. Glory to the Lord of the Prasad, the Giver of Immortality and undying happiness.

Vibhuti is the Prasad of Lord Siva, to be applied on the forehead. A small portion can be taken in. Kumkum is the Prasad of Sri Devi or Sakti. To be applied at the space between the eyebrows (Ajna or Bhrumadhya). Tulasi is the Prasad of Lord Vishnu, Rama or Krishna.

All these Prasads are given on all important religious functions.

6. Worship of Lord Subrahmanya

Prostrations and salutations to Lord Subrahmanya, the Supreme Being, who is the ruler of this Universe, who is the Indweller of our hearts, who is the second son of Lord Siva, who is the beloved of Valli and Devayani, who bestows boons easily on His devotees, who is an embodiment of power, wisdom, love and bliss.

The Asura Taraka oppressed the Devas very much. He drove them from the heaven. All the Devas went to Brahma. Brahma said to the Devas, "O Devas, I cannot destroy Taraka as he has obtained my grace through severe Tapas. But I shall give you a suggestion. Get the help of Kama Deva, cupid or god of love. Induce him to tempt Lord Siva who is absorbed in His Yogasamadhi to unite with Parvati. A powerful son, Lord Subrahmanya (Karttikeya) would be born to them. This son Would destroy the Asura." Indra asked Kama to go with his wife, Rati and his companion Vasanta (the spring) to Mount Kailasa, the abode of Siva. Kama at once proceeded to Mount Kailasa along with Rati and Vasanta. Spring season came in immediately. Kama stood behind a tree and shot his arrow of passion at Lord Siva when Parvati was putting flowers in His hand. As soon as Parvati's hand came in contact with the hands of Lord Siva, He

experienced a feeling. Siva wondered what it was that disturbed his Yoga. He looked round and saw cupid behind a tree.

Siva opened His third eye and Cupid was burnt into ashes by the fire that emanated from His third eye. That is the reason why Cupid is called Ananga or the bodiless.

After burning Kama Deva, Lord Siva found out by His Yogic vision that the birth of Lord Subrahmanya was absolutely necessary to destroy the powerful Taraka. Siva's seed was thrown into Fire who, unable to retain it, threw it into Ganga who in turn threw it into a reed forest where Karttikeya (Lord Subrahmanya) called the Reed-born (Sara Janma) was born. He became the leader of the celestial hosts and the Destroyer of the Asura Taraka as Brahma intended.

Lord Subrahmanya is an Avatara of Lord Siva. All incarnations are manifestations of the one Supreme Lord. Lord Subrahmanya and Lord Krishna are one. Lord Krishna says in the Gita. "Senaninam Aham Skandah—of Generals I am Skanda." The Lord manifests Himself from time to time in various names and forms for establishing Dharma and punishing the wicked.

Lord Subrahmanya is a ray born of the Chaitanya of Lord Siva. He is the energy of Lord Siva. Valli and Devayani are His two wives. They represent the Kriya Sakti and Jnana-sakti of Lord Subrahmanya. He is a Pratyaksha Devata in this Kali-yuga like Hanuman. He bestows material and spiritual prosperity and success in every undertaking on His devotees, even if they show a little devotion to Him. He is worshipped much in South India. Guha, Murugha, Kumaresa, Karttikeya, Shanmukha (he who has six heads), Subrahmanya, velayudha (he who wears the spear) are synonymous terms.

Has six heads), Subrahmanya, Velayudha (he who wears the spear) are synonymous terms.

In the picture of Lord Subrahmanya, He holds a spear (Vel) in His hand, just as Lord Siva holds the trident (Trisula) in His hand. This is an emblem of power. This indicates that He is The ruler of this universe. The devotees of Lord Subrahmanya in worship to the Vel. His vehicle (Vahana) is peacock. He rides on the peacock. This represents that He has entirely conquered pride, egoism, vanity. There is a cobra under His feet. This

indicates that He is absolutely fearless, immortal and wise. Valli is on His one side, Devayani is on His other side. Sometimes He stands alone with the Vel. He is called now by the name Dandapani and Velayudha. This represents His Nirguna aspect which is free from Mala.

The six heads represent the six rays or six attributes viz., Jnana (wisdom), Vairagya (dispassion), Bala (strength), Kirti (fame), Sri (wealth) and Aisvarya (divine powers). They indicate that He is the source for the four Vedas, Vedangas and the six schools of philosophy, that He has controlled the six viz., the five Jnana-indriyas and the mind. They denote that He is the Virat-purusha with thousand heads or countless heads. They signify that His head is turned everywhere (Visvatomukha) i.e., He is all-pervading. They indicate that He is omnipotent and that He can multiply and assume forms at His Will.

There are big temples of Lord Subrahmanya in Tiruchendur in Tirunelveli district, in Udipi, Palani Hills, Kathirkamam in Sri Lanka, and Tirupparankundram. Lord Subrahmanya showed His Bala Lilas in Tiruchendur and had his Samadhi in Katirkamam. If any one goes to Katirkamam With faith, devotion and piety and stays in the temple for two or three days, Lord Subrahmanya gives orders to the devotee. The devotee gets experiences. A big festival is held in this temple every year on Skanda-shashti. Thousands of people visit this place. Mountains of camphor are burnt on this occasion.

During Skanda-shashti, the day on which Lord Subrahmanya killed the Asura Taraka, great festivals are held in these places with great pomp and grandeur. Skanda.shashti comes in the month of November. Individual devotees also do worship, Bhajan and Kirtan in a very grand scale on this day. Thousands are fed sumptuously. Many incurable diseases are cured if one visits Palani and worships the Lord there. In South India Lord Subrahmanya's Lilas are exhibited on the stage.

The famous Nakeerar has sung 'Tirumurukatrupadai' in His praise. He who studies this famous book daily, with devotion gets success in life, peace and prosperity. 'Tiruppugal' is a famous book in Tamil which contains the inspiring songs of Arunagirinathar in praise of Lord Subrahmanya. Arunagirinathar had direct Darsan of Lord Subrahmanya. ‘Kavadichindu'songs also are in praise of Lord Subrahmanya.

O Lord Subrahmanya, O All-merciful Lord! We have neither faith nor devotion. We do not know how to worship Thee in the proper manner, or to meditate on Thee. We are Thy children who have lost the way, forgotten the goal and Thy Name. Is it not Thy duty, O Compassionate Father, to take back these lost children under Thy shelter, to caress and protect, and shower Thy grace and benedictions? O Mother Valli, will you not introduce us to Thy Lord? Mother's love for Her children is weightier than any object in this world. Though we have become worthless and undutiful children, O beloved Mother, pardon us. Make us dutiful and faithful. We are Thine from this very second, always Thine. All is Thine. It is Mother's duty to correct, educate, rect

7. Worship of Lord Ganesa

Salutations to Lord Ganesa also called Ganapati who is Brahman Himself, who is the Supreme Lord, who is the energy of Lord siva, who is the source for all bliss, and who is the bestower of all virtuous qualities and success in all undertakings.

मूषिकवाहन मोदकहस्त चामरकर्ण विलंबितसूत्र।

वामनरूप महेश्वरपुत्र विघ्नविनायक पाद नमस्ते॥

Mushika-vahana modaka-hasta

chamara-karna vilambita-sutra;

Vamana-rupa mahesvara-putra

vighna-vinayaka pada namaste.

O Lord Vinayaka, the remover of all obstacles, the son of Lord Siva, with form which is very short, with mouse as Thy carriage (Vahana), with Modaka (sweet ball) in hand, with wide ears and long hanging trunk, I prostrate at Thy lotus-like feet.

Lord Ganesa is the elephant-headed God. He is worshipped first. His Names are repeated first before any auspicious work is begun, before beginning of any kind of worship.

He is the Lord of power and wisdom. He is the eldest son of Lord Siva and the eldest brother of Skanda or Karttikeya. He is the energy of Lord Siva and so he is called the son of Sankara and Uma.

The following story is narrated about His birth and His having the head of an elephant. Once upon a time, at bathing time, the Goddess Gauri, the spouse of Rudra, created Ganapati wa Suddha, pure (white being) out of the mud of Her body and placed Him at the entrance of the house. She told Him not to w anybody inside and went for a bath. Lord Siva Himself returned home quite thirsty and was stopped by Ganapati at the gate. Siva got angry and cut off Ganapati's head, taking Him for an outsider. ster. Gauri came to know of this and grieved much. Sivaify and mould Her reckless children when they are straying aimlessly in the wrong path. Remove the gull or the veil that separates us from Thee. Bless us. Enlighten us. Take us back to Thy Lotus Feet. We have nothing more to say. This is our fervent prayer to Thee and Thy Lord, our beloved and ancient Parents. Ordered His servants to bring the head of any creature that might. be sleeping with its head northwards. The servants made a thorough search and found only an elephant in that position, The head of the elephant was cut off and brought before the Lord. Siva joined the head of the elephant to the body of Ganapati.

Lord Siva made Him worthy of worship by men at the beginning of all their undertakings, marriages, journey, expedition, study, etc. He ordained that the annual worship of Ganesa should take place on the fourth day of the bright half of Bhadrapada (August-September).

Without the grace of Sri Ganesa and His help nothing whatsoever can be achieved. No action can be undertaken without His support, grace or blessings.

During Aksharabhyasa, the boys are initiated into His Mantra of Om Sri Ganesaya Namah in Maharashtra and other places. Then only the alphabet is taught.

The following are some of His most common Names: Sumukha, Ekadanta, Kapila, Gajakarnaka, Lambodara, Vighnaraja, Vinayaka, Dhumaketu, Ganadhyaksha, Balachandra, Gajanana, Vakratunda, Surpakarna, Heramba, Skandapurvaja, Siddhivinayaka, Vighnesvara. He is also known as Maha-Ganapati. His Mantra is Om Gam Ganapataye Namah. Sadhakas

who worship Ganesa as their Ishta-devata repeat this Mantra or Om Sri Ganesaya Namah.

Om Tat purushaya vidmahe vakratundaya dhimahi; tanno danti prachodayat—This is Ganesa Gayatri. His devotees can do Japa of this Mantra also. Lord Ganesa is an embodiment of wisdom and bliss. He is the Lord of Brahmacharins. He is the foremost among Brahmacharins or celibates.

He rides on the Vahana, the small mouse. He is the presiding deity of the Muladhara-chakra. His form representse OM or Pranava. He is the Lord who removes all obstacles in spiritual path and worldly success. So He is called Vighna-Vinayaka. His Bijakshara is Gam. He is the Lord of harmony and peace.

Riding on the mouse represents that He has killed egoism. He holds Ankusa. This represents that He is the ruler of the word. This is an emblem of Divine Royalty.

Ganesh is the first God (Adideva). Mouse is a small creature. Elephant is the biggest of all animals. Riding on a mouse and wearing the head of an elephant denote that He is the creator of all creatures from the biggest elephant to the smallest mouse. Elephants are very wise. Wearing the head of an Elephant indicates that Lord Ganesa is an embodiment of wisdom. It also denotes the process of evolution. The mouse gradually evolves into an elephant and finally becomes a man. That is the reason why Ganesa has a human body, the head of an elephant and mouse as His vehicle. This is the symbolic philosophy of His form.

He is the Lord of Ganas or groups such as group of elements, group of senses, group of Tattvas. He is the head of the followers of Siva.

The Vaishnavas also worship Lord Ganesa. They have given Him the Name of ‘Thumbikkaialvar' i.e., God with the proboscis.

Lord Ganesa's two Saktis are Kundalini-sakti and Vallabha-sakti.

Lord Ganesa is very fond of Modaka (sweet balls made of rice). On one Ganesa-puja day He was going from house to house accepting the offerings of Modaka. Having eaten a good number of these offered to Him, He set out moving on the mouse at night. Seeing a snake the mouse got

afraid and stumbled, with the result that He fell down. The stomach burst open and the Modakas came out Ganesa stuffed the Modakas into the stomach and catching the same snake tied it round his belly. Seeing all this, the moon in the sky heartily laughed. Ganesa was annoyed at the behaviour of the moon and pulled out one of His tusks and hurled it against the moon and cursed that no one should look at the moon on the Ganesa-puia day. If anyone looks at the moon he will earn bad name or censure or ill-repute. If anyone happens to see the moon on that day by mistake or by chance, he will be free from that ill-repute or blame if he repeats or hears the story of Lord Krishna's clearing His character in respect of the 'Syamantaka' jewel. Lord Ganesa was pleased to ordain thus. Glory to Lord Ganesa. How kind and merciful He is unto His devotees!

The worshippers of Ganesa look upon Him as being identical with the supreme Self. In the Ganapati Upanishad He is identified with the Supreme Self.

May the blessings of Sri Ganesa, the remover of all obstacles of His devotees be upon you all! May He remove all the obstacles that stand in your spiritual path and bestow on you both Bhakti and Mukti!

Chapter VII

INSPIRING DHVANIS

(Sing and Enter into Bhava Samadhi)

1. Jaya Ganesa, Jaya Ganesa, Jaya Ganesa Pabimam,

Sri Ganesa, Sri Ganesa, Sri Ganesa Rakshamam,

Jaya Sarasvati, Jaya Sarasvati, Jaya Sarasvati Pahimam,

Sri Sarasvati, Sri Sarasvati, Sri Sarasvati Rakshamam

Raja Rajesvari, Raja Rajesvari,Raja Rajesvari Pahimam,

Tripura Sundari, Tripura Sundari,Tripura Sundari Rakshamam.

Saravanabhava, Saravanabhava, Saravanabhava Pahimam,

Subrahmanya, Subrahmanya, Subrahmanya Rakshamam.

Vel Muruga, Vel Muruga, Vel Muruga Pahiman (Guhane),

Velayudha, Velayudha, Velayudha Rakshamam (Velane).

Sri Vyasa Bhagavan, Vyasa Bhagavan, Vyasa Bhagavan Pahimam,

Sri Baadarayana, Baadarayana, Baadarayana Rakshamam.

Sri Sankaracharya, Sankaracharya, Sankaracharya Pahimam,

Sri Vedanta Guru, Vedanta Guru, Vedanta Guru Rakshamam.

Sri Dattatreya, Dattatreya, Dattatreya Pahimam,

Sri Datta Guru. Datta Guru. Datta Guru Rakshamam.

Sri Sita Rama, Sita Rama. Sita Rama Pahimam,

Sri Hanumantha. Hanumantha, Hanumantha Rakshamam.

2. Jaya Guru, Siva Guru, Hari Guru Ram,

Jagat Guru, Param Guru, Sadguru Shyam.

3. Thars: Natesa Saranam Saranam Sri Venkatesa

Sri Sankaracharya Saranam Saranam Sri Vyasa Bhagavan

Sri Dattatreya Saranam—Saranam Sri Radhe Krishna

Sri Sita Rama Saranam—Saranam Sri Hanumantha.

4. Thars: Rama Rama Namostute.

Sri Vyasa Bhagavan Namostute,

Jaya Vishnu Avatar Namostute,

Sri Baadarayana Namostute,

Jaya Krishna Dvaipayana Namostute,

Sri Sankaracharya Namostute,

Jaya Jagadguru Namostute,

Sri Advaitacharya Namostute,

Jaya Sankar Avatar Namostute,

Sri Dattatreya Namostute,

Jaya Sri Avadhuta Guru Namostute,

Sri Guru Deva Datta Namostute,

Jaya Trimurti Avatar Namostute.

5. Dinabandhu Dinanatha Visvanatha he Vibho,

Pahimam Trahimam Prananatha he Prabho.

6. Om Siva Om Siva Omkara Siva,

Uma Mehesvara Tava Charanam,

Paratpara Siva Tava Charanam.

Namami Sankara Bhavani Sankara.

Girija Sankara Tava Charanam

7. Om Siva Om Siva Om Siva Om.

Om Siva Om Siva Siva Siva Om.

Om Hara Om Hara Om Hara Om,

Om Hara Om Hara Hara Hara Bhum.

Om Hari Om Hari Om Hari Om,

Om Hari Om Hari Hari Hari Om.

8. Hara Hara Hara Hara Bhum Bhum Bhum.

Hari Hari Hari Hari Om Om Om.

Hara Bhum Hara Bhum Hara Bhum Bhum Bhum,

Hari Om Hari Om Hari Om Om Om.

Hara Hara Hara Bhum Bhum Bhum,

Hari Hari Hari Om Om Om.

Hara Bhum Hari Om Hara Bhum Hari Om,

Hari Om Hara Bhum Hari Om Hara Bhum.

Bhum Bhum Bhum Bhum Bhum Bhum Bhum,

Om Om Om Om Om Om Om.

Bhum Om Bhum Om Bhum Om Bhum,

Om Bhum Om Bhum Om Bhum Om.

9. Siva Sankara Hara Sankara Jaya Sankara Pahi,

Nama Sankara Uma Sankara Jata Sankara Pahi.

10. Kasi Visvanatha Sadasiva-

Bhum Bolo Kailasapate

Bhum Bolo Kailasapate.....

11. Jaya Siva Sankara Hara Tripurari,

Pahi Pasupati Pinaka Dhari.

Jaya Siva Sankara Jaya Asurari,

Jaya Gangadhara Jaya Madanari.

Jaya Muralidhara Jaya Asurari (Kamsari),

Jaya Manamohana Kunja Bihari.

12. Sambho Sankar Hara Sadasiva

Sambho Sankar Hara Sadasiva,

Sambho Sankar Hara Sadasiva

Sambho Sankar Hara Sadasiva.

Sankar Sankar Jaya Mahadeva

Sankar Sankar Jaya Sadasiva,

Sankar Sankar Jaya Paramesvara

Sankar Sankar Jaya Haro Hara.

13. Sankara Siva Sankara Siva Sankara Siva Sankara,

Sankara Siva Sankara Siva Sankara Siva Sankara.

Madhava Hari Madhava Hari Madhava Hari Madhava,

Madhava Hari Madhava Hari Madhava Hari Madhava.

Raghava Raghu Raghava Raghu Raghava Raghu Raghava,

Raghava Raghu Raghava Raghu Raghava Raghu Raghava.

Achyutananda Govinda Hari Satchidananda Sasvata,

Achyutananda Govinda Hari Satchidananda Sasvata.

14. Hara Hara Siva Siva Sarvesa,

Satchidananda Sarvesa,

Sambho Sankara Sarvesa,

Sarvabhutadivasa Sarvesa.

Hari Narayana Sarvesa,

Anandatmaka Sarvesa,

Hari Govinda Sarvesa,

Sarvantaratma Sarvesa.

Kesava Madhava Sarvesa,

Sarvantaryami Sarvesa,

Akhilanda Advaita Sarvesa,

Vyapaka Paripurna Sarvesa.

15. Jaya Jaya Sita Rama Ramapati,

Jaya Jaya Radhe Shyam Shyam.

Jaya Jaya Sankar Kailasapati,

Jaya Umapati Maha Deva.

16. Rama Rama Rama Rama Rama Tarakam.

Rama Krishna Vaasudeva Bhakti Mukti Dayakam.

Janaki Manoharam Sarvaloka Nayakam,

Sankaradi Sevyamana Divya Nama Kirtanam.

Rama Rama Rama Rama Rama Rama Rama Ram,

Rama Rama Rama Rama Rama Rama Rama Ram.

17. Sri Rama, Raghu Rama, Param Dama, Bala Bhima.

Sri Rama Rama, Raghu Rama Rama, Param Dama Rama-Bala Bhima.

Bhakta Pala, Sakti Lola, Yukti Jala—Vittala,

Vittala Vittala, Vittala Vittala, Vittala Vittala—Vittala.

Bhakta Pala Pala, Sakti Lola Lola, Yukti Jala Jala—Vittala.

18. Rama Ho Krishna Ho—Radhakrishna Deva Ho,

Venugana Lola Nilamegha Shyama Krishna Ho.

19. Jaya Rama, Sri Radhe Krishna Bhajale Sita Ram,

Bhajale Sitaram Pyare, Bhajale Radheshyam.

20. Pathitha Janako Karo Punita -He Rama Sita He Rama Sita.

Ramam vande Dasaratha Baalam -Sitanayaka Raghukula tilakam,

Krishnam vande Nandakumaram -Radhavallabha Navanita choram.

21. Jaya Govindam Jaya Gopal -Kesava Madhava Dina Dayal,

Jaya Damodara Krishna Murari— Janaki Vallabha Sarvadhar.

22. Jaya Gopal, Jaya Gopal, Jaya Manamohana,Jaya Nandalal,

Jaya Jaya Vittala, Jaya Hari Vittala,

Vittala Vittala Jaya Panduranga.

23. Govinda Hare—Gopala Hare

Jaya Jaya Prabhu Dinadayala Hare.

24. Jagame Sundara Hai Do Nam

RADHESHYAM—SITARAM

DHVANIS

1. Krishnananda Mukunda Murare -Vamana Madhava Govinda,

Govinda, Govinda, Govinda, Govinda,

Krishna Rama Govinda, Rama Krishna Govinda,

Keshava Madhava Govinda, Hari Hari Hari Hari Govinda

2. Jaya Sitaram Jaya, Jaya Sitaram Jaya,

Jaya Sitaram Jaya Jaya Sita Ram;

Jaya Sitaram Jaya, Jaya Sitaram Jaya,

Jaya Sitaram Jaya, Sitaram.....

Jaya Sitaram Jaya, Jaya Sitaram Jaya,

Jaya Sitaram Jaya, Ram Ram Ram;

Sitaram, Sitaram, Sitaram Jaya, Sitaram.

3. Jaya Jaya Sitaramaki Jaya Bolo Hanumanaki,

Rama Lakshmana Janaki Jaya Bolo Hanumanaki.

Jaya Hanuman Jaya, Jaya Hanuman Jaya,

Jaya Hanuman Jaya, Jaya Hanuman.

4. Avadh bihari Sitaram—Kunj bihari Radheshyam,

Dhanush dhari Sitaram Murali dhari Radheshyam,

Jaya Dasaratha Nandana Sitaram Jaya Nanda Nandana Radheshyam.

5. Radheshyam, Radheshyam, Radheshyam,Jaya Radheshyam,

Vipin Bihari Radheshyam, Murali Dhari Radheshyam.

Jaya Duhkha Nasaka Radheshyam,

Prem Prakasaka Radheshyam,

Java Nanda Nandana Radheshyam,

Yasoda Nandana Radheshyam.

Girivaradhari Radheshyam, Adham Udharana Radheshyam,

Bansivala Radheshyam, Kamlivale Radheshyam.

Mohana Pyare Radheshyam, Shyama Pyare Radheshyam,

Radha Vallabha Radheshyam, Gopi Vallabha Radheshyam.

Bhakta Vatsala Radheshyam, Patita Pavana Radheshyam,

Janamana Ranjana Radheshyam,

Bhava Bhaya Bhanjana Radheshyam.

Jaya Sukhakari Radheshyam,

Jaya Duhkhahari Radheshyam.

6. Sri Rama Sita Rama,

Jaya Rama, Jaya Jaya Rama.

7. Sitarama, Sitarama, Sita Rama Ram,

Rama Siya, Rama Siya, Rama Siya Ram.

Sitarama Sitarama Sitarama Ram,

Radheshyama Radheshyama Radheshyama Shyam.

Shyama Hari, Shyama Hari, Shyama Hari, Shyam,

Rama Hari, Rama Hari, Rama Hari Ram.

8. Govinda Govinda Gopala Rama,

Gopala Gopala Govinda Rama,

Govinda Rama-Gopala Rama.

9. Govinda Ram Ram, Gopala Hari Hari,

Gopala Ram Ram, Govinda Hari Hari

10. Sita Rama Sita Rama Sita Rama Ram,

Radhe Krishna Radhe Krishna Radhe Krishna Krishna.

Radhe Radhe Radhe Radhe Radhe Radhe,

Jaya Sri Radhe Jaya Sri Radhe Jaya Sri Radhe.

Site Site Site Site Site Site,

Jaya Sri Site Jaya Sri Site Jaya Sri Site.

Hari Om Tat Sat Hari Om Tat Sat Hari Om Tat Sat.

Hari Om Santi Hari Om Santi Hari Om Santi.

11. Bihari, Murari, Girivaradhari,

Sri Krishna, Gopikrishna, Radhe Krishna.

Nandalala Kamlivala Bansivala,

Gokulaka Rahenevala Muralivala.

12. Bol Hari Bol Hari Hari Hari Bol,

Kesava, Madhava, Govinda Bol.

Bol Hari Bol Hari Hari Hari Bol,

Kya Lagega, Kya Lagega Prani Tera Mol.

Bol Hari Bol Hari Hari Hari Bol,

Sri Radhe Krishna, Govinda, Gopala Hari Bol.

13. Madana Mohana Bhajo Brindavana Chandra,

Bhajo Radhe Govinda Bhajo Radhe Govinda Bhajo.

14. Hari Haraye Namah, Krishna Yadavaya Namah,

Yadavaya Madhavaya Kesavaya Namah,

Gopala Govinda Rama Sri Madhusudana.

15. Jaya Muralidhara, Jaya Giridhari,

Jaya Manamohana Krishna Murari.

Jaya Sarangadhara Jaya Asurari,

Jaya Manamohana Rama Kharari.

Java Radhe Vallabha Kunjabihari.

Muralidhara Madhava Krishna Murari.

16. Jaya Rama Hare, Sukha Dhama Hare.

Jaya Jaya Raghunayaka Shyama Hare.

Govinda Hare, Gopala Hare,

Jaya Jaya Prabhu Dina Dayala Hare.

17. Radha Krishna Bhajo Kunjabihari

Muralidhara Govardhana Dhari

Muralidhara Govardhana Dhari

Muralidhara Pitambara Dhari;

Radhe Krishna Jaya Kunja Vilasa

Gopimanasa Rajahamsa

Gopimanasa Rajahamsa

-Gopimanasa Rajahamsa.

18. Gopala Krishna, Radhe Krishna

Krishna Murari, Girivaradhari.

Krishna Murari Mere Girivaradhari

Banke Bihari Mere Mohana Pyare

Krishna Kannaiya Rasa Rachaiya.

Aja Bansi Bhajanevale

Aja Bharatke Rakhavale

Aja Gaucharanevale

Aja Gitajnana Sunanevale

Aja, Aja, Aja, Aja.

Aja Beda Par Laganevale

Aja Duhkha Mittanevale

Aja Kashta Mittanevale

Aja Sivake Dhanush Utanevale

Aja Draupadi Chir Badanevale

Aja Makkhan Churanevale.

Avo Murari Girivaradhari

Krishna Kannaia Kahanevale

Makkhan Chor Kahanevale (Gopala Krishna...).

19. Rama Krishna Govinda-Jaya Jaya Govinda.

20. Prema Madhura Jugala Nama

Sitaram Radhekrishna.

21. Govinda Bolo Radhe Radhe.

22. Vipina Bihari (other party) Radheshyam

Kunja Bihari	Radheshyam
Banke Bihari	Radheshyam
Girvara Dhari	Radheshyam
Murali Dhari	Radheshyam
Krishna Murari	Radheshyam
Bansivale	Radheshyam
Muralivale	Radheshyam
Kamlivale	Radheshyam
Radhe Vallabha	Radheshyam
Gopia Vallabha	Radheshyam

23. Vipina Bihari Radheshyam

-Hare Krishna Hare Ram,

Kunja Bihari Radheshyam

-Hare Krishna Hare Ram,

Banke Bihari Radheshyam

-Hare Krishna Hare Ram,

Devakinandana Radheshyam

-Hare Krishna Hare Ram,

Gopika Vallabha Radheshyam

-Hare Krishna Hare Ram,

Radha Vallabha Radheshyam

-Hare Krishna Hare Ram,

Jaya Duhkha Nasaka Radheshyam

- Hare Krishna Hare Ram,

Yasoda Nandana Radheshyam

-Hare Krishna Hare Ram,

Java Nandanandana Radheshyam

- Hare Krishna Hare Ram,

Jana Mana Ranjana Radheshyam

-Hare Krishna Hare Ram,

Bhava Bhaya Bhanjana Radheshyam

-Hare Krishna Hare Ram,

Krishna Murari Radheshyam

-Hare Krishna Hare Ram,

Bansivala Radheshyam

-Hare Krishna Hare Ram.

24. Dudh Lelo Mere Gopala Bala—Nandalala (Dudh Lelo...)

Radhe Govinda Krishna, Radhe Gopala Krishna

Nanda Nandana Krishna, Navanita Chora Krishna

Venu Vinoda Krishna, Vedanta Vedya Krishna,

Govinda Rama Krishna, Gopala Rama Krishna

Gopala Mukunda Krishna, Hari Hari Rama Krishna.

25. Pado Pothi me Ram

Likho takhti par Ram

Gino ginti me Ram

(Dekho khambe me Ram)

Hare Ram Ram Ram.

Piyo coffee me Ram

Jimmo khane me Ram

Bolo ghumne me Ram

(Japo baithne me Ram)

Hare Ram Ram Ram.

Dekho ankhom me Ram

Suno kanomse Ram

Bolo jihva se Ram

Hare Ram Ram Ram.

Bolo jagrat me Ram

Dekho svapane me Ram

Pavo sushupti me Ram

Hare Ram Ram Ram.

Balyavastha me Ram

Yuvavastha me Ram

Vriddhavastha me Ram

Hare Ram Ram Ram

26. Saran me aye hai ham tumhari

Daya karo he dayalu Bhagavan

Na Ham me Sadhan

Na Ham me Sakti

Na Ham me Pujan

Na Ham me bhakti

Saran me aye hai ham tumhari

27. Isa asara samsara sindhu me—Ram Nam adhara hai

Jisne mukh se Ram kaha us Janaka bheda par hai

Ram Nam ka yas Mahes ne gaya,

Ram Nam ka phal Ganesh ne paya,

Ram Nam ne Valmiki ko tara,

Ram Nam Narada Muni ko hai pyara.

(Thars: La, la, la, la)

28. (a) Radhe Shyam, Shyam, Shyam, Shyam,

Jaya Jaya, Shyam Shyam Shyam Shyam

Ghan Shyam Shyam Shyam Shyam

Jaya Manamohana Kunjabihari (Radheshyam)

Radhe Krishna Gopala Krishna (Jaya Muralidhar).

Sita Ram Ram Ram Ram

Jaya Jaya, Ram Ram Ram Ram

Janaki Ram Ram Ram Ram.

Jaya Sarangadhar Jaya Asurari,

Jaya Manamohana Rama Kharari

Jaya Jaya Rama, Siyavara Rama

(Jaya Muralidhar).

(b) Radhe Shyam Shyam Shyam Shyam

Jaya Jaya Shyam Shyam Shyam Shyam

Ghan Shyam Shyam Shyam Shyam.

Jaya Muralidhar Jaya Kamsari

Jaya Manamohana Kunjabihari

Radhe Krishna Gopala Krishna. (Radheshyam)

(c) Sita Ram Ram Ram Ram

Jaya Jaya Ram Ram Ram Ram

Janaki Ram Ram Ram Ram

Jaya Sarangadhar Jaya Danushdhari

Jaya Manamohana Avadha Bihari

Jaya Jaya Ram Siyavara Ram

(Sitaram....).

29. Govinda Govinda Hare Murare

Govinda Govinda Rathangapane

Govinda Govinda Mukunda Krishna

Govinda Damodara Madhaveti.

Sri Krishna Radhavara Gokulesa

Gopala Govardhana Natha Vishno

Jihve Pibasvamritametadeva

Govinda Damodara Madhaveti.

Sri Krishna Vishno Madhukaitabhari

Bhaktanukampin Bhagavan Murare

Trayasvamam Kesava Lokanatha

Govinda Damodara Madhaveti.

30. Anjanasuta Hanumanta Hare bol.

Vayusuta Hanumanta ho.

Hukum lekar lanka jakar,

Vanme jake dekho

Asoka vaname Sita bhaithi

Ham bhi jake dekha

Rama Lakshmana do jane bhai

Ham Sri Ramjike dut hoin.

Khub premse chudamani dekarke

Ramji ka dil bahut khush ho.

31. Bhajo Radhe Krishna—Govinda

Bhajore Bhaiya—Govinda

Avo Pyare Govinda

Milkar Gavo Govinda

Prabho Prasida—Govinda.

32. Patita Janako Karo Punita

Hey Rama Sita Hey Rama Sita

33. Hari Hari Japna-Aur sab svapna

Guru Guru Japna-Aur sab svapna.

34. Hara Hara Mahadeva Sambho—Kasi Visvanatha Gange

Visvanatha Gange—Kasi Visvanatha Gange.

35. Dinoddharini Durita Harini

Sattva Raja Tama Triguna Dharini

Saguni, Nirguni, Anirvachaniya Ashtangi

Sandhya Savitri, Sarasvati, Gayatri

Rukmini, Janaki, Pankaja Lakshmi.

26 Radha Krishnane Trilokanathane

Venugana Lola Nila Megha Shyamane.

37. Hari Hari Bol—Bol Hari Bol

Mukunda Madhava Govinda Bol (Hari Hari Bol...).

38. Sunaja Sunaja Sunaja Krishna

Tu Gitavala Jnana Sunaja Krishna.

Pilade pilade pilade Krishna

Tu prembhar pyala pilade Krishna.

Dikhaja dikhaja dikhaja Krishna

O Madurike Murthi dikhaja Krishna.

Lagaja lagaja lagaja Krishna

Mera nayyako par lagaja Krishna

Kilade kilade kilade Krishna

Makkhan aur misri kilade Krishna.

39. Bol Sankar bol Sankar, Sankar Sankar bol,

Hara Hara Hara Hara Mahadeva, Sambo Sankar bol,

Siva Siva Siva Siva Sadasiva, Sambo Sankar bol.

40. Jayati Siva Siva Janaki Ram,

Jaya Raghunandana Radheshyam,

Avadha Bihari Sitaram, Kunjabihari Radheshyam

Avadha Sarayu Sitaram, Kamala Vimala Mithila Dham,

(Ganga Tulasi Saligram)

Dasaratha Nandana Sitaram,

Adhama Uddharana Radheshyam,

Dhanush Dhari Sitaram, Murali Dhari Madhava Shyam,

Jaya Raghunandana Sita Ram,

Jaya Yadu Nandana Radheshyam,

Jaya Bandhana Nasaka Sitaram,

Dvandva Nikhandana Radheshyam

Jayati Kharari Raghava Ram,

Jayati Murari Madhava Shyam

Jaya Duhkha Nasak Sitaram,

Prem Prakasaka Radheshyam

Bhava Sagara Tarana Sitaram,

Adham Uddharana Radheshyam

Jaya Jaya Raghuvara Rajaram,

Jaya Jaya Natavara Mohanashyam.

Jaya Arta Jana Sitaram,

Jaya Sukh Sampati Data Radhyshyam.

41. Jaya Nandalala Dina Dayala

-Jaya Krishna Jaya Hare Hare.

Jaya Nandalala Krishna Gopala

-Jaya Krishna Jaya Hare Hare.

Jaya Nandalala Paramadayala

-Jaya Krishna Jaya Hare Hare.

Jaya Nandalala Venugopala

-Jaya Krishna Jaya Hare Hare.

Jaya Nandalala Devakibala

-Jaya Krishna Jaya Hare Hare.

Jaya Nandalala Balagopala

-Jaya Krishna Jaya Hare Hare.

Jaya Nandalala Yasodabala

-Jaya Krishna Jaya Hare Hare.

Jaya Nandalala Gopilola

-Jaya Krishna Jaya Hare Hare.

Jaya Nandalala Yadukula Tilaka

-Jaya Krishna Jaya Hare Hare.

42. Bansuri Bansuri Bansuri Shyamaki

Sri Ram, Radheshyam, Sitaram Sri Gopal

Hare Ram, Hare Ram, Hare Ram Siyaram

Sitaram, Radheshyam, Sitaram Radheshyam.

43. Svara: Bansivala, Nandalala Gokulake Rahenevala-

Antaral

Koyi Koyi Kahe Krishna Murari

Koyi Koyi Kahe Natavara Giridhari

Japa Tumhari Maala-Nandalala-Gokulake Rahenevala

Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya-

Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya (Svara Bansivale..)

44. Bhajaman Rarayana Narayana-Narayana

Sriman Narayana Narayana-Narayana

Badri Narayana Narayana-Narayana

Lakshmi Narayana Narayana-Narayana

Hari Om Narayana Narayana-Narayana

Hari Om Hari Om Hari Om Hari Om

Hari Bol Hari Bol Hari Bol Hari Bol (Bhajaman Narayana)

45. Jaya Ganesa, Jaya Ganesa-Jaya Ganesa Gam

Namah Sivaya, Namah Sivaya, Namah Sivaya Bhum.

46. Jaya Siya Ram Jaya-Jaya Siya Ram

Jaya Radhesyam Jaya-Jaya Radhesyam

Jaya Hanuman Jaya-Jaya Hanuman.

47. MAHAMANTRA HAI YE, JAPA KAR JAPA KAR HARI

Om Tat Sat-Japa Kar Japa Kar.

48. Om Tat Sat, Om Tat Sat, Om Tat Sat Om

Om Tat Sat, Om Tat Sat, Om Tat Sat Om

Om Tat Sat, Om Tat Sat, Om Tat Sat Om

Hari Om Tat Sat, Sri Om Tat Sat Siva Om Tat Sat Om

Om Tat Sat, Om Tat Sat, Om Tat Sat Om

Om Santi, Om Santi, Om Santi Om…

49. Om Sakti, Om Sakti, Om Sakti Om

Brahma Sakti, Vishnu Sakti, Siva Sakti Om

Adi Sakti, Maha Sakti, Para Sakti Om

50. Jaya Lalite,Sri Lalite Tripurasundari Jaya Lalite

Jaya Gange, Sri Gange, Raja Rajesvari Jaya Gange

Jaya Gauri, Sri Gauri, Uma Mahesvari Jaya Gaur,

Two Party Dhvanis

51.(A) Madana Mohana Bhajo-

Brindavana Chandra Bhajo (One Party).

Radhe Govinda Bhajo- Radhe Govinda Bhajo (Other Party).

(B) Hare Krishna Hare Ram (One Party).

Radhe Krishna Radhe Shyam (Other Party).

(C) Hare Krishna Hare Ram (One Party).

Gopi Vallabha Radhe Shyam (Other Party).

(D) Anjaneya.. (One Party). Vira (Other Party.)

Hanumantha…(Other Party). Sura (Other Party).

Jaya Jayakar

Gajavadana Ganesa Maharajaki	Jay
Sitapati Ramachandrajiki	Jay
Brindavan Krishnachandrajiki	Jay
Umapati Mahadevaki	Jay
Saravanabhava Shanmukha Maharajki	Jay
Sarvasakti Svarupa Mahadeviki	Jay
Pavanasuta Hanumanki	Jay
Sab Santhanki	Jay
Gauranga Mahaprabhuki	Jay
Dattatreya Maharajki	Jay
Ganga Maharaniki	Jay
Sanatana Dharmaki	Jay

Jaya Jaya Sita Ram……

Jaya Jaya Radhe Shyam…...

Harih Om……..

Om Purnamada Purnamidam

Purnat Purnamudachyate

Purnasya Purnamadaya

Purnamevaavasishyate.

Om Santih! Santih! Santih!

Note: Whenever Sankirtan is held the above Jaya Jayakar should be repeated at the close of Sankirtan. The Sankirtan should begin with “Jaya Ganesa” and Mahamantra, viz.,

“Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare;

Hare krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare.”

Chapter VIII

Lives Of Bhaktas

1. Life of Prahlada

Once, when the sons of Brahma, i.e., the Sanatkumaras went to the world of Lord Hari, they were infants of five or six years with divine lustre in their faces, but they were older in wisdom than Marichi and other Rishis. The divine guards, Jaya and Vijaya did not allow the infants to have interview with Lord Hari. Those divine sentries were born as the sons of Diti Devi. The first born was Hiranyakasipu and the younger was Hiranyaksha.

Hiranyaksha was slain by Vishnu in the form of Varaha-Murti. Hiranyakasipu was very much enraged by the death of his brother. He said: “The unworthy weak Devas who were not able to stand against my powerful brother, took flight and killed my brother with the help of Lord Vishnu. I will plunge my trident on the neck of Vishnu who assumed the illusory Varaha form to kill my brother.” The Asuras destroyed the inhabitants at the command of Hiranyakasipu. Then Hiranyakasipu consoled his mother with soothing words.

Hiranyakasipu performed severe austerities on the slopes of the Manthara hills with uplifted hands and eyes, resting his toes alone on the ground in order to become a sovereign, invincible, devoid of a foe or age or death. He did severe Tapas for a hundred divine years without drinking even water. Brahma appeared before him and said: “O Hiranyakasipu, I am pleased with your Tapas. Ask any boon. I shall grant you.” Hiranyakasipu was very much delighted by the Darsan of Brahma and asked, "My Lord, let me not have death from any of your created beings.” Brahma granted this request. On the strength of this boon, Hiranyakasipu forcibly deprived Indra of his regal throne. He was doing severe havoc to the Devas.The Devas praised Lord Hari and prayed for His help. They heard a voice in the sky: “"O Devas, fear not. I know the atrocious acts of Hiranyakasipu. I shall destroy him. Let the proper time come. My Darsan will bring bliss unto all.”

Four sons were born of Hiranyakasipu. Prahlada was chief among them. He was very pious from his boyhood. He was a jitendriya, one who has control over his senses. His heart was filled with true devotion to the Lord. He was a friend to all. He had Visva-Prem, cosmic love. He spoke the truth at all times. He was always in a meditative mood. He possessed all divine qualities. He had unflinching devotion to Lord Hari. Sometimes he would

weep and sometimes he would laugh. At times, he would sing the Names of the Lord and dance in divine ecstasy. He used to shed tears of devotion (Ananda-bashpa) with hairs on end. Even during his daily activities, sitting, eating, walking, etc., he constantly remembered the Lord.

Prahlada was sent to the Asura Gurus, Chanda and Marka (sons of Sukra) for education. The teachers taught him along with the other Asura boys. Prahlada thought that one who exhorted the students to remember constantly one thing, viz., the Name of Lord Hari only could be a teacher, father, mother and friend, all in one. Prahlada did not get this sort of lesson from his teachers and so he found the study worthless. His father placed Prahlada on his lap and asked him, “O darling, tell me a little of what you think best out of your studies.” Prahlada promptly replied: "Father, leaving my home which is the cause of hell and taking refuge in Lord Hari and retiring to a solitary place for practising deep meditation is the best.” Hiranyakasipu laughed and said that his son's intellect was spoiled by the wrong instructions of others. He instructed the teachers to teach the boy in the ‘right’ way. The Asura teachers took Prahlada to their houses and interrogated:”O dear Prahlada, tell us the truth.how did you learn these perverse teachings which are beyond the understanding of a boy?” prahalada replied: “O Revered Guruji! Just as iron oscillates in the presence of magnet, so also my Buddhi agitates in the presence of Lord Hari of its own accord. There is no certainty about the next breath. It may stop its movement at any moment. Therefore, what one should do is to chant from one's very childhood nothing but the Name of Lord Hari.” Then the teachers threatened Prahlada with the following words: “Bring a cane. He who brings destruction of the race, who brings disgrace to the family, who has perverted intellect by repeating the Name of Hari, must be punished. Here is a thorny tree amidst a forest of sandalwood trees. This boy with perverted intellect is undoubtedly an axe of Vishnu who cuts at the root of the Asuras. In future you should not utter the word Hari.”

After the lapse of some months, the teachers took Prahlada who was well-versed in the four arts, to his father. Hiranyakasipu placed Prahlada on his lap and asked him: “O my sweet darling! Tell me now the essence of what you have learnt all these days." Prahlada replied: "Listening to the stories of Lord Hari (Sravana), singing His Names and praises (Kirtan), remembering Him constantly (Smaran), prostrations and service unto the sacred Lotus Feet (Padasevan), offerings unto Him (Archan), salutations (Vandan), service (Dasya), friendship (Sakhya), and dedication of one's

self or self-surrender (Atmanivedan), are the nine-fold characteristics of devotion to be practised towards Lord Hari. These I think are the supreme lessons.” Hiranyakasipu was very much disappointed when he heard the words of his son and addressed the teachers: “O wretched Brahmins with crooked intelligence! Why have you taught my son these useless lessons? He is attached to my enemy Vishnu in utter disregard of my words. You are teaching him the lessons that are calculated for my downfall and ruin.” The teachers in a trembling voice replied: “Kindly do not misunderstand us. We did not teach him any such lessons. This Buddhi is naturally his own. He neve obeyed our words and learnt our lessons, and so we ha brought him here before you."

Then Hiranyakasipu asked his son: “If these teachinae were not imparted to you by your Gurus how and where did you get this evil and crooked intelligence?" Prahlada coolly replied: Worldly-minded people again and again enjoy the sensual Pleasures. They have impure minds and undisciplined Indrivas. They again and again enter the wombs. Their minds cannot be fixed at the sacred Feet of Lord Hari. Their minds are saturated with sensual Vasanas. They do not have Vichara-Sakti (power of discrimination between real and unreal). They do not care for God-realisation or emancipation. They run after sensual enjoyments only. Their minds and Indriyas are endowed with out-going tendencies towards worthless, perishable mundane objects. They are ignorant, blind people. When they remove their ignorance by Satsanga and devotion to Lord Hari, they can have pure intelligence.”

On hearing these words, Hiranyakasipu was enraged. With biting lips goaded by anger he pushed his son from his lap. His eyes became red. He addressed the Asuras: “O mighty men! Kill this boy immediately. Neck him out. He has committed real patricide. He worships the feet of Vishnu, who destroyed his own uncle. The boy of five has abandoned his love for his parents. Kill him by all devices, even by expedients such as getting the elephants to trample him down, by fierce serpents, and destructive Mantras, by rolling him from the top of a mountain, confinement in dark cells, poisoning, starvation, exposure to icy cold, wind, fire, etc.” The Asuras tried all the means in vain. They utterly failed in their attempts. Even amidst all tortures Prahlada repeated the Name of the Lord with great joy. Nothing could hurt him. Hiranyakasipu was not able to kill this boy. He at last, with a heavy heart spoke as follows: “This boy is fearless and

deathless. He is of immeasurable greatness. Truly I am going to die on account of his hatred. Otherwise I am unslayable."

The teachers, Chanda and Marka, consoled Hiranyakasipu with the following Chanda a with the following soothing words: "O venerable king of so Asuras! This boy must be kept under restraint until the arrival of Sukracharya by means of Varuna-pasa so that he may not run away. In course of time and by the teachings of great men, he may come to his proper senses." Hiranyakasipu asked them to teach him Raja-Dharma, the duties that are required for kings and householders.

Prahlada began to instruct his schoolmates in the following manner: "Dear friends, the whole creation from Brahman down to the meanest blade of grass, is illusory. If there is anything real, it is the Name of Hari and Hari alone, which is thrice true. Hari is the lord, well wisher and the very soul of all beings. His feet must be worshipped by everybody. He is the supreme refuge for all. He bestows supreme bliss, immortality and eternal peace. Worldly minded people sell their precious lives for the sake of money. They die for the sake of women and money. Poor, deluded souls! They are deluded by their powerful Indriyas.

"Even a learned man is immersed in Samsara. He has not got even a minute to study the true nature of the Lord. Is this not sad and deplorable. Despite his learning, he is sunk in ignorance as he identifies himself with the perishable body. He always says: 'I am a Brahmin I am a pandit. I am a rich man. I am fatty. I am weak. I am deaf. I am blind. This is my wife. This is my son. This is my house.' The ideas of I-ness and mine-ness are deeply rooted in him. How can you call him as a man of real learning?

"The six changes, viz., existence, birth, growth, modifications, decay and death, belong to the body and not to the Immortal Soul. This Atman is eternal, indivisible, all-full, undecaying, immortal, pure, unchanging, self luminous. Beyond time, space and causation, unattached and unconditioned. Just as a goldsmith by his cleansing process separates gold from the dross, so also the knower of the true self by his Sadhana (spiritual practices) separates himself from the illusory five sheaths or three bodies and attains Brahman, the Atman. This body is made up of five elements. You must negate the superimposed vehicles, by the doctrine of 'Neti-Neti' (Not this, Not this) this, Not this) and realise the pure Atman by the process of elimination. The whole creation from Brahma down to a blade of grass is illusory. What outshines all, reducing the whole world into mere

nothingness before it, is the all-conscious, all-blissful and the all-pure Name of Hari and Hari alone.

Dear friends! If there is anything sweeter than all sweet things more auspicious than all auspicious objects and more Purifying than all purifying agencies, it is the Name of Hari and Lari alone. Abandon the company of worldly-minded Asuras. Tway from all your evil actions. Take to Satsanga (association with wise men). Seek refuge in 'Narayana,' the Supreme Lord. He is an embodiment of peace, bliss and knowledge.

"Lord Hari is seated in all. He constantly resides where His devotees sing with devotion His Name and nothing else. You should practise devotion to Lord Hari. Then only you will attain true, everlasting bliss and knowledge. What is the use of running after momentary sensual pleasures? There are no difficulties in worshipping Lord Hari who is seated in the chambers of your hearts, who is the real friend, benefactor, father, mother and Guru. This filthy physical body for which man desires all pleasures, is perishable. It is the food for the jackals, fishes and dogs. Lord Hari is pleased by pure love. Give your heart to Him. He does not want anything from you. Lord Hari cannot be obtained by much learning or charity or austerity or vows. Half the man's life is wasted in sleep. Major portion of the rest is spent in old age, ignorance in boyhood, troubles, difficulties, diseases, etc. When you have only a very little time at your disposal, why do you run after the sensual pleasures? Spend at least this little period in remembering the Lord and developing devotion unto His Lotus Feet and cross this ocean of birth and death (Samsara-sagar) with its concomitant evils. Therefore at all times practise sincere devotion and love towards Hari. Blessed is the Name of the Lord Hari which is like a thunder to the mountain of sins and an infallible remedy for the disease of worldly existence, which acts as sunrise in dispersing the grossest darkness of the night of illusion and which like a huge wild fire burns up the formidable tree of worldly sufferings and which constitutes a doorway to the abode of Bliss. Do not waste even a single second. Now sing His Name from the bottom of your heart:

Pado pothi me Hari (Ram),

Likho takhti me Hari (Ram),

Dekho khambe me Hari (Ram);

Hare Hari (Ram), Hari (Ram), Hari (Ram).....

Suno kanom se Hari (Ram);

Dekho Hridaya me Hari (Ram),

Bolo Jihva se Hari (Ram);

Hare Hari (Ram), Hari (Ram), Hari (Ram)....."

When the Asura boys heard these sweet words of Prahlada, they did not pay any attention to the words of their teachers. They were much impressed by the golden advice given by Prahlada. The Asura boys began to be a slave of Hari abandoning all their bad qualities and followed the instructions of Prahlada. The teachers found that all the boys began to sing the Name of Lord Vishnu and dance in joy with Prahlada. They took Prahlada and ran to the king and informed him of the conduct of all boys and the teachings of Prahlada. Hiranyakasipu was very much enraged when he heard the conduct of his son and his influence over all Asura boys. He abused Prahlada; “O wretched fellow! O vile wretch of perverted intelligence! O traitor to the race, I shall kill you now. You have disregarded my words and your duties to your parents.”

Prahlada replied: "O king! It is not that I or you are strong. That Lord Hari who is the Creator of the three worlds and who is the Support of all beings is all-powerful. He is the soul of all beings. He is time. He is Prana. He is vitality of the Indriyas and mind. He controls the three energies. He is the Inner Ruler. He is the Witness (Sakshi) of all our actions. He is the protector. He creates, sustains and destroys the world. O what a pity! what a great pity that the world has in its pursuits of glittering piece of glass (sensual pleasures), cast into oblivion a priceless jewel, viz., the Name of Lord Hari. Dear father, do not be puffed up with your pride and vanity and be carried away by your powerful senses. Give up your Asuric nature. Get peace of mind. Develop devotion to Lord Vishnu. This wicked mind is your enemy. How can you claim to be a king when you have six powerful enemies (Kama, Krodha, Lobha, Moha, Mada, Matsarya) inside your mind? He who has destroyed these six enemies and conquered his mind is the real emperor, King of kings, but not he who has a territory. He who has not conquered his mind has not conquered anything, even though he possesses this world under his sway.

"Before Vishnu all mightiest men and Asuras in the past fell easy victims to his fiery ire, like cotton before the wind. There is none now who is not afraid

of Lord Vishnu. The real refuge can be sought only in Vishnu through devotion. Therefore, let your mind, from this moment, seek an asylum in the seat of Lord Hari. May the grand Mantra `NARAYANA, NARAYANA' open your eyes. Those who worship and salute the Lord will be able to attain their desired results only when they contemplate Him with pure devotion. Therefore always remember Him and sing His praise." Hiranyakasipu lost his temper when he heard these words. He said to him: "0 fool! You blabber too much. I shall send you to the world of Yama (Yama-loka). Where is that another sovereign of the Earth? Where is He? Where is your Hari or Narayana or Vishnu about whom you speak very highly?"

Prahlada promptly declared: "Lord Hari is here. Lord Hari is there. He is everywhere." Hiranyakasipu asked him: "Then Why not in this pillar?" Prahlada replied: "Surely He is in this pillar also." Hiranyakasipu did not see Hari in the pillar and shouted: "O silly boy! I will kick the pillar. Let me see your Hari is there or not. If there is no Hari in this pillar, I will cut your throat with this very sword. Let your Hari protect you." So saying Hiranyakasipu sprang from his seat and kicked the pillar. thundering voice came from the pillar by which the whole A ole universe was rent asunder. Lord Hari in the form of Narasimha came out of that pillar. This form was of a terrible nature. 0 what a marvel it was! That was neither a man nor a beast, but combined form of a man and a lion. Many Asuras fled away on account of extreme fear.

Hiranyakasipu was dazzled by the effulgent form of the Lord. He immediately took up his sword and shield to attack the Lord Narasimha. Just as a snake catches a frog, the Lord caught hold of Hiranyakasipu. He placed him on the threshold and tore him with his nails as Garuda tears the serpent.

Then, the Vimanas of the Devas, the rows of aerial chariots filled the sky. The Divine music and Dhundubhis were played. The Gandharvas sang celestial songs. The Apsaras danced. All praised the Lord in various ways.

Prahlada was immersed in divine joy and devotion. His hairs stood on their ends. Tears of devotion dropped down from his eyes in a continuous stream. He prostrated at the Feet of the Lord and said:

"I consider riches, noble lineage, personal beauty, rigid mortification (Tapas), a knowledge of the Sastras, the keenness of the senses, amiability of person, courage, might, diligence, prudence and Yoga—all these twelve qualifications are of no avail in the adoration of the Supreme Being, Lord Hari, for indeed that Almighty Lord was satisfied with Gajendra not for anything else but for his great piety and devotion towards Him.

"I consider even a Svapacha (one who eats dog's meat) who hath dedicated his thoughts, his words, his deeds, his riches and his life to the Lord, to be worthier than that Brahmin who though possessing the above-mentioned twelve qualifications, is disinclined to worship the Lotus Feet of the Lord, since the former sanctifies his race, while the latter puffed up with immense conceit cannot do so.

"O Thou That art affectionate towards the helpless! Terribly afraid am I of the insufferable woe that is met with, when beings are whirled on the Samsara-chakra (wheel of birth and death). Bound fast by my actions, I have been thrown by them into the midst of unfavourable conditions. O Holiest of holies! When shalt Thou recall me unto the root (Primal source of Mercy) of Thy ever beneficent Feet?

"Having my mind thus absorbed in tasting the nectar-like singing of Thy prowess, I do not entertain the least fear in crossing the Vaitarani (fiery river) of this Samsara, but I feel extremely sorry for the pitiable condition of these poor wretches of human beings who, declining to have any taste of this ambrosia, are labouring under the dead weight of sensual enjoyment which is not only altogether illusory but also disappointment to the extreme. "Even when Lord Brahma, gods and sages are not able to worship Thee in a suitable manner, how can I, a boy of Asuric race, adore Thee! 0 my Lord! I am Thy devoted servant, cherishing no desire. Thou art my Master. Thou art the Supporter of the whole universe, the Ruler of rulers. Thou appearest at the mind's door of the devotee who has renounced the world and has subdued all his desires, whose barrier of mental darkness, incidental to humanity, has been gradually removed by the development of the perfection resulting from Thy worship and from introspection (deep meditation) carried on with great concentration of mind. Thou art the All-merciful, Giver of all liberation and the Friend in affliction. I prostrate at Thy Lotus Feet. Make me desireless."

At this sincere prayer of the child, the Lord blessed him and said: "Since you have pure devotion of a high standard, I am very much pleased. By your true devotion, you have purified your father and your forefathers as far back as twenty-one generations. Where my Bhakta lives, the very land itself is purified. Those who take refuge in you, also become my Bhaktas." Those who hear this story, the glory of Prahlada, greatest among Bhaktas, with faith, devotion and purity of heart, attain Immortality, eternal Peace, highest Bliss and supreme Knowledge of the Self".

2. Life of Narada

(From Bhagavata)

Sage Narada said:

"In the previous Kalpa, in my former birth, I was born of a certain maid-servant of Vedic Rishis. Certain Yogis had collected at a place to pass the rainy season and I was engaged as a boy to serve them. Seeing me void of all fickleness as a boy and self-controlled, the Munis, who looked on all with equal eyes, were kind to me, especially as I gave up play, followed them, served them and talked little. With the permission of the regenerated, I, at one time, partook of the remnants of their meal, and the impurities of my mind were all removed. When thus my mind became pure, my inclination grew towards their Dharma. By their favour, I heard them sing the beautiful stories of Krishna. Hearing those stories every day with faith, I gained holy love for Krishna. Through that love, my mind became fixed on Him and I came to perceive my Sthula and Sukshma bodies as only false reflections of the real Self or Brahman. The Bhakti that grew up in me destroyed my Rajas and Tamas. Then when the kind Rishis were about to leave the place, they imparted to me most of the occult knowledge which had been given to them by Bhagavan Himself. Through that knowledge I have known the Maya of Bhagavan. It is by that knowledge that one reaches the plane of Bhagavan. As I cultivated this occult knowledge, Bhagavan appeared Himself and gave me knowledge and powers direct."

(Sridhara Swami, the commentator of Bhagavata Purana notes the following points in the above story: (1) Seva, i.e., service of and attendance on Mahatmas, (2) their Kripa or favour, (3) trust in their Dhanna, (4) hearing the stories of Bhagavan, (5) attachment to Bhagavan, (6) knowledge of Self by the discrimination of the Sthula and the Sukshma body, (7) firm Bhakti,

(S) knowledge of the reality of Bhagavan, and (9) the appearance of omniscience and other powers through the favour of Bhagavan).

What followed then, inquired Vyasa, Narada continued: “sometimes after my teachers, the Bhikshus had gone away, any mother died of snake-bite. I deemed that as an act of God and went towards the north. After crossing several forests, rivers and and there sat under a Peepal tree. As directed by my teachers, i meditated on the Self in the Selt through the Self my mind had been completely conquered by Bhakti. As i was devotedly meditating on the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan with tear-drops in my eyes, Hari gradually appeared in my heart. O Muni, the hairs of my body stood on end through exuberance of holy love, I was completely lost in joy and knew not either self or any other. The indescribable Isvara spoke thus in solemn words: “O thou doest not deserve to see Me in this life, I am difficult to be seen by imperfect Yogis whose likes and dislikes have not been completely burnt up. I have shown Myself to thee that thy Kama may all be centred in Me. When I am the object of Kama, the Sadhu gives up all other desires. By prolonged service of Mahatmas, thy mind is firmly fixed in Me. Therefore shalt thou give up this faulty body and acquire My companionship. The mind fixed in Me is never destroyed in creation or in Pralaya, nor does the memory fail.'

"So saying Isvara disappeared. In time, when I was drawn towards the pure body with which I was favoured by Bhagavan, the body of my five Bhutas fell down on the extinction of my Prarabdha-karma. When the Kalpa came to an end my new body was indrawn by the breath of Brahma who was going to sleep. After one thousand Yuga cycles, when Brahma awoke and desired to create, I, Marichi, and other Rishis came out. Since then I have invariably observed Brahmacharya and through the favour of Vishnu have been travelling all over the three worlds both inside and outside, my passage being wholly unobstructed. The Devas gave me this Vina which is adorned with Svara-Brahma. By playing upon this Vina, I send forth songs of Hari all round. These songs are the only means of crossing the ocean of recurring lives."

This is the mystery of Narada as related in the Puranas. Narada is the repository of occult knowledge from the previous Kalpa, the first and foremost adept of this Kalpa. His mission is to spread occult knowledge, by unceasingly playing on the seven musical notes. He is ever watchful and always bides his time in all cyclic changes. He is the only Rishi of whom the

Vina is a constant accompaniment, as it is of the goddess Sarasvati. His sphere of action is Triloka and the dwellers of Bhur, Bhuvah, and Svah alike respect him. He is the universal counsellor even of the highest Devas and of the highest Rishis. His constant mission is the good of the universe. One thing is said of him, that he sometimes serves his purpose by setting one against another, and amongst the ignorant, his name is a bye-word for quarrel. However that be, the greatest good of the universe in this Kalpa has always been done by him. It is under his inspiration, that Valmiki and Vyasa wrote their most occult words and his benign influence is observed in all universal changes for good. The Bhagavata recites his constant endeavours to do good.

3. Life of Dhruva

(From Bhagavata)

Uttanapada is one of the sons of the first Manu. Uttanapada means 'with uplifted foot.' This perhaps refers to the period when the Jiva, having still the spiritual element strong in him, was not fixed in the course of material descent, but had one foot towards Mahar-loka. Uttanapada had two wives Suruchi (with good graces) and Suniti (of good morals). Uttama (the highest) was the son of Suruchi. Dhruva (the fixed) was the son of Suniti. Once upon a time, Dhruva found Uttama on his father's lap and he wished to be there himself. For fear of Suruchi, Uttanapada did not dare stretch his hands towards Dhruva, while Suruchi herself taunted the boy for his impudent aspiration. Stung to the quick by the bitter words of his step-mother, Dhruva forthwith left the place and went straight to his mother and related to her his grievances. Suniti advised her son who was only five years old to make Tapas. Dhruva did not lose time but left home to do Tapas, as directed by his mother, Narada met him on the way. “Thou art a child, Dhruva", said the great Rishi. "How is it possible for thee to find Him out by Tapas, who is attainable by intense Yoga, concentration and freedom from passion practised for several births? Desist, my boy, for the present. Try, when thou hast enjoyed all the things of the world and hast gorown old.” But Dhruva was fixed in his resolve and he importuned Narada to teach him how to meditate. Narada initiated Dhruva into the mysteries of the Mantra 'Om Namo Bhagavate Vaasudevaya', told him how to meditate on Vaasudeva and asked him to make Tapas at Mathura where Bhagavan permanently resides. Dhruva passed his days in austere asceticism, standing on one foot and living on air. The prince at last

controlled his breath and with deep concentration saw the Divine Light in the heart. Bhagavan withdrew that Light from the heart, and on the break of Samadhi, Dhruva found the same Divinity outside, standing before him. Words he had none for a time. Bhagavan addressing him said: “O thou Kshatriya boy! I know thy resolve. Do thou ever prosper. I give thee a place which is ever bright and where Nirvana is constant. The planet and stars are attached to that place. Those that live for a Kalpa will die, but that place shall never be destroyed. Dharma, Agni, Kasyapa, Indra and the seven Rishis with all the luminaries of the sky are constantly revolving round the place. Thou shalt succeed thy father on the throne and reign for 36,000 years. Thy brother, Uttama shall disappear in a forest. Thy P-mother Suruchi shall die in pursuit of her son. The place where thou shalt finally go, is My own abode, higher than that of the Rishis, and there is no return from it.”

Dhruva returned to his parents and was placed by his father on the throne. He married Bhrami, the daughter of Sisumara, and had two sons by her, Kalpa and Vatsara. He had another son Utkala by Ila. Uttama was killed by a powerful Yaksha while out on a hunt. Dhruva went out to the north to take revenge on the Yakshas for his brother's death. He killed several thousands of innocent Yakshas and Kinnaras in battle. Manu took pity on them and asked his grandson to desist from fight. Dhruva bowed in obedience to Manu and so Kubera the King of Yakshas became much pleased with him and blessed him too. After thirty-six thousand years, Sananda and Nanda, two companions of Vishnu came with a chariot and took Dhruva to the promised abode.

4. Life of Ratnakar

Ratnakar was a great robber. He used to waylay the passers-by, kill them mercilessly and take all they had. He was doing great havoc. Luckily he met Rishi Narada and this meeting entirely changed his life. He repeated Mara, Mara with devotion and practised deep meditation for several years. He never left his seat. He was so much absorbed in divine contemplation that an ant-hill formed around his body. This gave him the name Valmiki, i.e., an anthill. He became a distinguished poet. He wrote the Ramayana. What a striking incidence!

5. Life of Jagai and Madhai

Jagai and Madhai were two wicked people who lived in Navadvipa at the time of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. They were brothers. Generally, all messengers of God, all prophets who preached the Truth were persecuted. Some even died for their convictions. Lord Jesus was crucified at the cross. Lord Gouranga also did not escape. The people of Navadvipa persecuted him. Jagai and Madhai troubled him and his followers very much. Gouranga resolved to conquer them. He, one day, proceeded with his Kirtan party, singing Hari's Name. Nityananda, the chief disciple of Lord Gouranga was in the party. They met Jagai and Madhai. There was severe fight with cudgels. All fled away. But Nityananda, though severely Wounded, stood firm. He came with out stretched hands to embrace with lve Jagai and Madhai. these two ruffians were eventually overpowered by the pure love of Nityananda. They became the zealous disciples of Lord Gouranga. There is no power on earth greater than love. Love conquers all. Love triumphs in the end. Hatred ceases not by hatred, but ceases by love. You can break the strongest iron chain through practice of Pranayama. But you cannot break the chain of pure love. Love is invincible. Love is God. God is Love. Therefore develop Divine Love.

6. Story of a Thief

One day a thief entered the cottage of saint Pavhari Baba, a contemporary of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. He collected in a bag all the vessels and was about to leave. Pavhari Baba was not in the cottage when the thief entered into it. When the Saint entered his Kutir, the thief left all the things and ran away. Pavhari Baba carried the bag on his shoulder and followed the thief. He said, "O thief Narayana, I never knew that you were in my cottage. This is your property. Pray, kindly accept them." He prostrated before the thief and placed the bag at his feet. The thief was thunder-struck. He repented very much for his wrong action. At once, he became a changed man. God's grace descended on him then. He prostrated before the saint and said: "My Lord, I have done a serious crime. Forgive me. Make me thy disciple. Give me Guru-Mantra. Initiate me." He got the Guru-Mantra. He did serious Sadhana and meditation and became a good saint.

He met Swami Vivekananda in the Himalayas and narrated to him the above incidence in detail. Swami Vivekananda was very much attracted by this saint.

Pavhari Baba not only had Sama-drishti (equal vision) but also had Samavarti (equal treatment).

7. Life of Namdev

Namdev, a Bhakta in Pandharpur had a piece of bread and ghee ready for his breakfast. He was about to take his meals, when suddenly a dog rushed inside, snatched the bread in its mouth and ran away. Namdev went running after the dog with ghee in his hand, crying: “O Lord Vittala, dry bread is not palatable for thee. Kindly take this ghee along with the bread.” He fed the dog with the bread mixed in ghee. He himself did not take his food that day. To Namdev, who had Para-bhakti, the very dog was God Vittala (Lord Krishna). Mark the glory of Divine Prem! Namdev had developed Para bhakti. He saw Lord Krishna in all beings.

8. Story of Puja with Two Cats

Ramnath Misra of Kanpur was doing Puja of Lord Krishna in the morning. Two cats ate the Prasad that was kept for the Lord. Ramnath Misra daily tied the two cats to a post that was in front of him, and did the Puja. Bolenath Misra, son of Ramnath Misra also tied two cats in front of him in his Puja room and did his Puja regularly in the morning. One day Ramnath saw two cats in the Puja room of his son and asked his son, "Bolenath. Why do you tie two cats in front of you?” Bolenath replied, “Venerable father, I saw two cats in front of you in your Puja room; so I also tied two cats in front of me in my Puja room. I thought that two cats must be tied in the Puja room when I worship the Lord.”

This sort of Puja is done by several persons. The father does some sort of Sandhya, worship or prayer or rites. The son also imitates the father to make people think that he is also religious and pious.

You should have a proper understanding of the method of worship, the meaning of the verses you recite, the significance of the Mantras and rites, the benefits of Japa and worship. You should cultivate Sraddha, Bhava and devotion. You should have Ruchi, taste for God's Name. You should have knowledge of the science of Upasana, Japa-yoga, Mantra-yoga and Bhakti-yoga. You should have a clear idea of the goal and nature of God. You should have Vairagya. You should know how the Japa of Mantra produces its purificatory effect on the mind, destroys Rajas and Tamas, fills the mind with Sattva, purity, and changes human nature into divine nature. Then

only you will be highly benefited. Then only you will have quick progress in the spiritual path. Do not tie two cats in your Puja room like our friend Bolenath. Enquire. Think. Cogitate.

Irreligious parents will have irreligious children. Parents themselves should lead a religious and pious life. They should be well versed in the science of Upasana, Mantra-yoga, Japa-yoga and Bhakti-yoga. They should train their children in the spiritual path from their very boyhood in the proper manner. Then alone the house will be a Vaikuntha on earth. Then alone there will be harmony, peace, plenty, prosperity in the house. A life without religion is a dreary waste and real death.

9. The Story of Ambarisha

King Ambarisha had discrimination and dispassion. His devotion was great. His mind was fixed on the Lotus Feet of Lord Vishnu, his words were all about the glory of Vaikuntha, his hands were engaged in cleansing the temples of Vishnu, his ears only heard about the glory and the words of Vishnu and his eyes intently looked on the symbols of Vishnu wherever found. His body felt pleasure in the touch of Vaishnavas, his nose smelt the sweet fragrance of Tulasi proceeding from the feet of Vishnu, his tongue tasted only food offered to Vishnu, his feet traversed the places sacred to Vishnu and his head was devoted to the salutation of Vishnu. If he enjoyed things of the world, it was for service to Vishnu and not for the sake of enjoyment. If he had attachment, it was only for those that were devoted to Vishnu. The fruits of his action he offered to Him. By devotion and by unselfish performance of duties pertaining to his sphere of life (Svadharma), he pleased Bhagavan and by degrees he gave up all desires. Vishnu was so much pleased with the king that He gave him His own Chakra for protection.

Ambarisha with his wife once undertook to perform tivadasi-vrata for one year. (Dvadasi is the twelfth day of the lunar fortnight. The Vrata consists in fasting on the eleventh day and in breaking the fast on the twelfth day). On one occasion he fasted for three consecutive days. He bathed himself in the holy river Yamuna and worshipped Vishnu at Mathura. He gave plenty of riches and cattle to the Brahmanas He then fed the Brahmanas and asked their permission for him i to break the fast. At that time Rishi Durvasa appeared as his guest. The king received him duly and requested him to take his meals. The Rishi consented and went to bathe in the river and

perform his daily rites. The king waited long for him but he did not return. There was only half a Muhurta now remaining of Dvadasi. If the king did not eat anything, he would be breaking his Vrata. If he ate, he would be showing disregard to a Brahmana. At this juncture, the king decided to serve both ends by taking a little water, for the Brahmanas call that both eating and non-eating. Durvasa came back. By spiritual vision, he knew what had happened and became highly enraged. He tore up the hair tuft and charged it to kill Ambarisha. The king remained unmoved. The Chakra of Vishnu consumed the destructive force sent by Durvasa and went even to destroy him. The Rishi ran in every direction. The Chakra followed him wherever he went. He went to Brahma and prayed to be saved. "It is not in my power to save thee," said Brahma, "thou halt offended a votary of Vishnu." He went to Siva. "Child" said Siva, "this weapon of Vishnu is too much for me even. Go thou to Vishnu." Durvasa went to Vishnu and prayed to be pardoned and saved. Said Vishnu, "O Brahmana, I am dependent on my Bhaktas. I am not free. My heart is in the possession of My Bhaktas. I am dear to them. Without My Bhaktas, I do not even want Myself, nor My absolute powers, for I am their sole and supreme resort. They forsake their wives, homes, children and wealth for My sake. How can I forsake them! Their heart is chained to Me. They look on all with equal eyes. By devotion they win Me even as chaste wives win their husbands. MY service is all in all to them. They do not even desire the four Muktis, Salokya and others, though these come within their easy reach. What perishable objects can they have desire for?

The Sadhus are My heart. I am the heart of the Sadhus. They do not know anyone besides Me nor do I know any one besides them. O Brahmana, hear what is thy only remedy. Without delay go to him who has caused this fear in thee. When force is used against Sadhus, it reacts on him who uses the force. True asceticism and wisdom are both for the salvation of the Brahmanas. But in one untrained, they produce the contrary effect. Therefore, go thou to Ambarisha. Beg his pardon and thou shalt be saved."

Durvasa went back to Ambarisha and touched the feet of the king. Ambarisha became nonplused at this act of the Brahmana and knowing the object of the Rishi, he prayed to the Chakra to desist from its course and to save the Brahmana. The Chakra had just commenced its work of destruction, but it withdrew its energies upon the prayer of Ambarisha. Durvasa was extremely thankful and he thus praised the king, "I see this day the greatness of Vaishnavas, O king. Thou didst pray for my welfare,

though I had offended thee. There is nothing strange for those that have conquered Vishnu Himself. Thou hast been very kind to me. Thou hast favoured me much. Thou didst not even think of my offence but thou hast saved my life." The king had waited for Durvasa all this time. He now fell at the feet of the Rishi and requested him to take his meals. The Rishi gladly did so and also made the king take his food.

Durvasa then went to Brahma-loka. He did not return for one year and the king lived upon water only all this time, being so anxious to see the Rishi back. Such is the holy story of Ambarisha!

APPENDIX

1. Bhakti Yoga Prasnottari

1. What is the goal of life?

Self-realisation or attainment of God-consciousness.

2. What is the Svarupa of Moksha?

Sarva duhkha-nivritti and Paramananda-prapti. Removal of all kinds of pain and attainment of supreme bliss.

3. How can you attain Moksha easily in this Kali Yuga?

By Smarana of Hari-Nam and doing daily Hari-Nam Sankirtan.

4. What is Bhakti-yoga?

It is the path of devotion in which there is attachment to God, the partner.of the Soul of man, which brings cessation of wants, desires and miseries of mundane life. It is the path of Prem which unites the Jiva with the Lord.

5. What is that thing which is superior to Rama even?

Ram-Nam. How? Sri Hanuman told Sri Rama "O my Lord, there is something superior to Thee." Sri Rama was quite astonished. He asked Hanuman: "What is that thing, O Hanuman, which is superior to Me?" Hanuman replied, "O Lord, Thou hadst crossed the river with the help of a boat. But I crossed the ocean with the help, power and strength of Thy

Name only. The stones floated in Thy Name only. Therefore, Thy Name is indeed superior to Thee."

6. What are the proofs for the existence of God?

Who gave intelligence to the cells and the glands of the body to secrete semen, milk, bile, saliva, gastric juice, etc., from the blood? Who gives food to the frog which remains between the strata of rocks? What is the power that sustains the child and helps its growth in the mother's womb? What is that hidden miraculous power that brings out a huge form with hairs, fingers, eyes, nose, legs, etc., out of one drop of semen? It is God or Isvara the Ruler, the Creator.

7. What is the nature of God?

God is Truth. God is love. God is the Light of lights. God is an embodiment of Peace, knowledge, Bliss and Beauty.

8. Where is God?

He is in your heart. He is the Indweller of our hearts (Antaryamin).

9. What is the Mahamantra which gives freedom easily in this Iron Age?

"Hare Rama Hare Rains Rama Rama Hare Hare;

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare."

10. What is Bhakti?

It is supreme devotion and intense attachment to the Lord.

11. What are the six means of developing or cultivating Bhakti?

Service of Bhagavatas, Sadhus and Sannyasins, repetition of God's Name, Satsanga, Hari-kirtan, study of Bhagavata or Ramayana, and stay in Vrindavan, Pandharpur, Chitrakut, or Ayodhya or other holy places-these are the six means of cultivating Bhakti.

12. Who can sing the Name of Hari?

Trinadapisunichena tarorapi sahishnuna,

Amanina manadena kirtaniya sada Harih.

"He who is humbler than the blade of grass, who has the Power of endurance like the tree, who cares not for honour and Yet honours all is fit for singing the Name of Hari all the time."

13. What are the five thorns in the path of Bhakti?

Jati vidya mahatvancha rupa yauvanamevacha,

Yete Bhakti margeshu janitha pancha kantaka.

"Know that caste, learning, position, beauty and youth are the five thorns in the path of devotion."

14. Where is Divine Nectar?

Learned people say: That the nectar can be found in the ocean, in the moon, in the world of serpents (Nagaloka), in the heaven. If this be true, how can there be saltishness in the ocean, decrease in the moon, poison in the mouths of serpents, death of Indra (or dethronement)? Therefore the true nectar can be found in the neck (sayings or teachings) of Bhagavatas (devotees of the Lord).

15. How are Bhaktas to be known?

Bhaktas do not care for anything. Their hearts are fixed at the Lotus Feet of the Lord. They are very humble. They have equal vision. They have no attachment towards anybody or anything. They are without mine-ness or I-ness. They have no distinction between sorrow and happiness. They do not take anything from others. They can bear heat, cold or pain. They have love for all living beings. They have no enemies. They are serene. They possess exemplary character. Name of Lord Hari is always on their lips. They are very pious. They see Hari in all beings and objects. They never hurt the feelings of others. They are friendly towards all. They are free from anger, hatred and pride.

16. What are the two inner enemies that stand in the way of developing Bhakti?

Lust and anger.

17. What are the ten vices that follow lust?

Love of hunting, gambling, sleeping in the day time,' slandering, company with bad women, drinking, singing songs, dancing, music of a vulgar nature and aimless wandering about.

18. What are the eight kinds of vices that accompany anger?

Injustice, rashness, persecution, jealousy, capriciousness, cheating (taking possession of other's property), harsh words and cruelty.

19. What are the eight signs of Bhakti?

Asrupata (tears), Pulaka (horripilation), Kampana (twitching of the muscles), crying, laughing, sweating, Murcha (fainting) and Svara-bhanga (inability to speak).

20. How did the Lord help His Bhaktas?

Lord Krishna Himself conducted the marriage ceremony of Narsi Mehta's daughter. He brought ghee for the Sraaddha of Narsi's mother. He guided the blind Vilvamangal to Vrindavan by holding the stick in His hands. He massaged the feet of the Raja, during the days of absence of His barber Bhakta.

21. What are the five indispensable requisites in the Bhakti-marga?

Bhakti should be of a Nishkamya type. It should be Avyabhichmini also. It should be continuous like the flow of oil. The aspirant should observe Sadachara, right conduct. He should be very, very serious and earnest in his devotional practices. Then only realisation of God will come very quickly.

22. How to do some kind of intense Sadhana?

Get up at 4 a.m. Start your Japa on any Asana you have mastered. Do not take any food or drink for fourteen hours. Do not get up from the Asana. Control passing urine till sunset if you can. Do not change the Asana if you can manage. Finish the Japa at sunset. Then take milk and fruits. Practise this during holidays once in a fortnight or once in a month or once in a week.

23. How to do Anushthana for 40 days?

Do japa of Ram Nam one lakh and twenty five thousand times at the rate of 3,000 daily. Get up at 4 a.m. Do the Japa. Do the Anushthana at Rishikesh, Haridwar, Prayag, Nasik or Benaras or Vrindavan or Ayodhya, or Chitrakut. If not, do it at your own house. During the last five days do 4,000 Japas. You can do one lakh of Japa also daily by sitting on one Asana alone. On the last day do Havan and feed some Brahmins, Sadhus and Sannyasins.

24. How can Nirakara formless, become Saakara with form?

Just as water can exist in two states, viz., formless as steam, and with form as ice, so also Brahman can be both Nirakara and Saakara. Nirakara Brahman takes form just for the sake of pious meditation of His Bhaktas. Just as air is formless and takes a form as cyclone, so also the formless Brahman assumes form.

25. Are Bhakti and Jnana incompatibles like acid and alkali?

No. Jnana intensifies Bhakti. The fruit of Bhakti is Jnana. Para-bhakti and Jnana are one. Sri Sankara, a Kevala Advaita Jnani was a great Bhakta of Lord Hari, Hara and Devi. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa worshipped Kaali and got Jnana through Swami Totapuri, his Advaita Guru. Appayya Dikshitar a famous Jnani of South India was a devout Bhakta of Lord Siva.

26. Who is a blind man?

A blind man is not one who is not able to see with his physical fleshy eyes, but one who is not able to perceive the one Imperishable Essence, Hari who is hidden in all names and forms.

27. Who is a dead man?

A dead man is not one whose Pranas have departed from his physical body, but one who spends his life in eating, drinking and sleeping only and who is not attempting to worship Hari for attaining liberation.

28. Who is a cobbler?

A cobbler is not one who manufactures shoes, but one who talks of his body and its relations and who has Charma-drishti and not Atma-drishti.

29. What is Japa?

Japa is the recitation of any Mantra of God.

30. How many varieties of Japa are there?

Three varieties: Vaikharai (verbal), Upamsu (whispering), and Manasic (mental).

31. What are the fruits of each variety?

The fruits of Upamsu are a thousand times more than those of Vaikhari; the fruits of Manasic-Japa are ten thousand times more than those of Vaikhari.

32. What is the difference between Japa and Dhyana? Japa is the repetition of any Mantra. Meditation on the form of Lord Hari or Krishna or any other form of God with His attributes is Dhyana.

33. How to do Dhyana of Hari?

Mentally fix your mind at His Lotus Feet. Then rotate the mind on His silk cloth, Srivatsa, Kaustubha gem on His chest, bracelets on His arms, ear-rings, crown on the head, then conch, discus, mace, lotus in the hands and then come to His Feet. Repeat the process again and again.

34. Where to concentrate the mind?

In the lotus of the heart (Anahata-Chakra) or the space between the two eye-brows (Trikuti) according to your taste and predilection.

35. What are the two kinds of Bhakti?

Apara-bhakti (lower devotion) and Para-bhakti (higher devotion).

36. What is Apara-bhakti?

The Bhakta has his chosen idol. He does ritualistic worship and ceremonies.

37. What is Para-bhakti?

The Bhakta of this type sees Hari everywhere and in all objects. His mind is ever fixed continuously at the Lotus Feet of the Lord like the continuous flow of oil. He has all-embracing, all-inclusive universal love. He has not got the least hatred for any being. He sees the whole world as Visva-Vrindavan.

38. What is the Sakama-Bhakti?

In Sakama-bhakti the devotee worships God to get money, son or success in an undertaking or to free himself from a' disease.

39. What is the Nishkama-Bhakti?

Here, the devotee has no expectation of fruits. He wants God and God alone. It is love for love's sake.

40. What is Vyabhicharini-Bhakti?

To love God for two hours and to love wife, son and property for the remaining time, is Vyabhicharini Bhakti.

41. What are the nine modes of Bhakti?

Sravana hearing the Lilas of the Lord, Kirtana singing His praises, Smarana remembering God, Padasevana worshipping the Lotus Feet of God (service of humanity, country, poor people), Archana offering of flowers, Vandana prostrations, Dasya service, Sakhya friendship, Atmanivedana, complete self-surrender—these are the nine modes of Bhakti.

42. What is the difference between Sneha, Prem, Sraddha and Bhakti?

The love that is shown to inferiors as children is Sneha. Prem is love between equals such as wife, friends etc. Sraddha is love towards superiors such as parents, teachers and others in like position. Bhakti is devotion to God.

43. What are the five kinds of worship?

Worship of Ganesa, Hari, Siva, Surya and Sakti.

44. What are the five kinds of Bhava?

Santa-Bhava (quietude), Dasya-bhava (servitude), Sakhya-bhava (friendship), Vatsalya-bhava (paternity) and Madhurya- bhava (conjugality).

45. What are the five classes of worship?

Worship of elementals and departed spirits, worship of Rishis, Devas and Pitris, worship of Avatars, worship of Saguna- brahman, and worship of Nirguna-brahman.

46. What are the four kinds of Mukti?

The Bhakta remains in the Loka wherein Lord Vishnu resides like the inhabitant of a State. This is Salokya-mukti. He remains in close proximity with the Lord like the attendant of a king. This is Samipya-mukti. He gets the same form of the Lord like the brother of a Raja or Yuvaraja. This is Sarupya-mukti. He becomes one with the Lord like salt or sugar in water. This is Sayujya-mukti.

47. What are the four degrees of Bhakti?

They are tender emotion, warm affection, glowing love and a burning passion. Another classification is admiration, attraction, attachment and supreme love.

48. Will a devotee who has realised God get rebirth? Are his Vasanas destroyed completely? Will he experience pain?

He will not get re-birth. All Vasanas are now destroyed. He will not experience any kind of pain. He gets Krama-mukti or progressive emancipation. He goes to Brahmaloka, Go-loka or Vaikuntha. Eventually he merges in Nirguna-brahman.

2. Bhakti Yoga Alphabets

Ananya-bhakti is single-minded devotion to the Lord exclusive of anything else.

Bhakti-yoga is the easiest path for God-realisation in this Iron Age.

Chandrayana-vrata is observed by the devotees to destroy sins and propitiate the Lord.

Dasya-bhava is the servant Bhava entertained by the devotee towards the Lord (his Master).

Eshana-trayam (the 3 desires for wealth, children and heaven) stands as a hindrance to the development of true devotion.

Faith in the existence of God is the foundation of Bhakti.

Guru is the visible God on earth for the devotee.

Horripilation or Pulaka is the standing up of the hairs of the body experienced by the devotee as he advances in devotion.

Ishtadevata is the deity of one's liking or choice by the worship of which the Bhakta attains God-consciousness.

Japa of the Names of the Lord brings purity of mind and increases concentration to a great degree.

Krishna is the Supreme Deity, the destroyer of the stains of Kali.

Lajja for the utterance of the Names of the Lord is a great obstacle for the beginners in the path of devotion.

Madhurya-bhava is the highest culmination of Bhakti.

Navavidha-bhakti should be practised by all aspirants in the path of Bhakti Yoga.

Offering of the body, mind and soul exclusively to the service of God is Saranagati or self-surrender.

Padasevan is service of the Lotus Feet of the Lord or service of humanity with Narayana-Bhava.

Quiescence of the mind is a qualification common to both the Vedantin and the Bhakta.

Ruchi is the taste for the repetition of the Names of the Lord.

Sakshatkara is attainment of God-consciousness.

Trishna or internal craving for sensual objects is quite detrimental to the growth of Bhakti.

Upasana is worship of God.

Viraha is intense pain caused by the separation of the Lord that is felt by the sincere devotee.

Weep for the separation of the Lord but not for the death of relatives or loss of wealth.

X' mas holidays should be well utilised for the completion of at least one Purascharana of your Ishta-Mantra.

Yogakshema of the devotee is vouchsafed by the Lord.

Zeal and sincerity of purpose paves a long way in God-realisation.

3. Glory of Ram Nam

Name of the Lord Sri Rama is the tree of spirituality. It is the destroyer of the impurities of the mind. It bestows supreme peace, eternal bliss and infinite knowledge. It infuses Divine Love in the hearts of the reciters. It is the fountain-head of all happiness. May that Name, the giver of Immortality, remove all your fears and bring solace and supreme joy to all!

Name of Sri Rama is sweeter than the sweetest of objects. It is a haven of peace. It is the very life of pure souls. It is the purifier of all purifying agencies. It quenches the consuming fire of worldly desires. It awakens the knowledge of God which is dormant in our hearts. It bathes the aspirant in the ocean of divine Bliss. Glory to Sri Rama and His Name!

In the inside of every object, there is one Rama alone without any interstice. Wherever I see there is Rama. He ever sports in joy. The whole world is His Lila. In the flower, in the tree, in the sky, there is Rama. In the water, in the food, there is Rama. In the post, in the wall, there is Rama. In the umbrella, in the pen, in the paper, there is Rama. There is Rama everywhere. There is no world without Him. This universe is filled with Rama. How can I describe His unparalleled Glory! Victory to Rama! Glory to Rama! Adorations to Rama and salutations to Rama!

Blessed is the pious soul who drinks uninterruptedly the nectar of Sri Rama's Name which has been churned out of the ocean of the Vedas, which removes the impurities of the Iron Age, which lives constantly on the tongue of Lord Siva, which is a sovereign remedy or unfailing-specific to cure the disease of worldly existence and which is life itself to Mother Janaki.

Tulasidas says: "Name is even superior to the Lord because the Nirguna and Saguna aspects of Brahman are tasted' and realised by the power of Name. Rama delivered a single lady Ahalya, whereas the Name has purified crores of wicked men. Rama gave salvation to two of his faithful servants Jatayu and Sabari, but the Name has been the saviour of countless devoted persons."

He is not tired of emphasising on the importance of Rama Nam. He says, "Blessed is the son and blessed are his parents who remember Sri Rama in whatsoever way it may be. He who repeats Rama's Name even through mistake, can wear a pair of shoes made out of the skin of my body. Blessed is the outcaste and Chandala who repeats the Name of Rama day and night. What is the use of high birth to one who does not repeat Rama Nama? The high peaks of mountains give shelter only to snakes. Blessed are the sugarcane, the com and betel leaves that flourish in the low plains and give delight to all."

He further says, "The two sweet fascinating letters in Sanskrit Ra and Ma are like the two eyes of the alphabets and the very life breath of the devotees. They are easy to remember and delightful to all. They are beneficial in this world and sustain us in the other world." He says "Put this jewel, Light of Rama Nama, at the gate of your door, the tongue, if you want to f illuminate yourself, both inside and outside (in and out yourself). All the world knows by uttering the Name even its opposite way, by saying 'Mara', 'Mara', instead of a `Rama', the great saint Valmiki became Brahman Himself."

When such is the glory of repetition of ultanama, (name in she reverse order) then what to speak of the glory of uttering the right and proper Name?

Every Name of God is filled with various Divine Saktis and nectar. The means by which Sri Rama can be reached is to take His Name and to

remain saturated in it. Always remain drunk imbibing the Lord's sweet Name. Let no ideas of purity or impurity enter your mind. There is no unholy object in the world. Should there be any, it becomes the holiest of the holy by contact with the Lord's Name.

Illusion, notwithstanding all her efforts, fails to get hold of him who remains deeply absorbed in the Lord's Name and Love. Glory to Rama! Prostrations to Rama!

4. The Maha Kumbha Mela

(Importance of Pilgrimage)

The Maha Kumbha Mela is held during March-May once in 12 years at Haridwar, Allahabad, Ujjain and Nasik. There are some fixed days during the period of the Mela for bathing in the Ganga and a bath on those days is considered very sacred. Millions of people assemble here during these months.

Ambrosia.or the nectar which confers Immortality was kept in a vessel (Kumbha). For getting the nectar, there was a tough fight between the Asuras and Devas for 12 days. During the fight, the Kumbha fell on earth four times at Haridwar, Allahabad, Ujjain and Nasik. At the end of 12 days when sun was on Mesha-rasi and Jupiter in Vrishabha-rasi, Lord Vishnu appeared and brought peace to one and all by distributing the nectar to deserving people. The Mela comes once in 12 years equivalent to 12 days of the Devas. Vishnu Purana says: “A bath in the Ganga on the Kumbha day will give the spiritual benefits of one lakh of Pradakshina around the earth.” Millions of people assemble at Haridwar for taking a bath in the Ganga on the sacred day.

In olden days Kumbha Melas were started for the moral and spiritual uplift of the people. Many Mahatmas, sages, Yogins and spiritual preceptors who were practising Tapas and silent meditation in the caves of the Himalayas and forest assembled in these places during these days for imparting spiritual instructions to the thirsting aspirants and householders. There was not much noise in those days. People went with Sraddha and Bhava to have Darshan of these Mahatmas and to imbibe the teachings of those highly elevated souls. Religious classes were held, Kathas and discourses were conducted and lectures were delivered by great men of practical

experience. Real, sincere aspirants were initiated into the mysteries of Yoga and Kaivalya.

What do you find in these days? There will be feasts everywhere. People are attempting to amass wealth in a variety of ways. They are trying their level best to become rich within these three months. The sanctity of the functions has vanished. The real spirit is gone. It has become a mere fair. Real, silent Mahatmas do not wish to attend the Mela. The Kumbha Mela or the All-India Religious Conference of a magnanimous, sublime nature of yore wherein Rishis, sages and Yogins assembled to exchange their thoughts and spiritual experiences and to disseminate spiritual knowledge to the aspirants and householders at large, has now degenerated into a big Tamasha or a big fair with tumultuous noise, uproar and merry-gorounds. Now-a-days there is not much to be seen in the Kumbha Mela except some crowd, noise, dirt, filth, quarrels and fights. The Government has built a separate Police station with a Reserve Police for this purpose. No religious propaganda can be done. People's minds get restless and agitated in the enormous crowd. They have to wander amidst all sorts of people and spend sleepless nights with poor accommodation. They undergo a lot of trouble through infectious diseases that are common in all the crowded places. People enjoy some show, colour, sound, blows and then return home with nothing substantial after spending the money in useless directions. millions of people are in anticipation of getting joy, bliss spiritual benefits by attending the Melas. This is the trick of Maya through the force of curiosity to delude people who have lost their power of discrimination.

As there is abundant free food for Sadhus and Sannyasins. beggars in orange-robe flock in countless numbers to have an easy comfortable living for three months. Money is simply wasted. Worldly people are deceived. They are not able to find out real spiritual souls. Systematic organised religious preaching must be done. Then the Kumbha Mela will become a blessing to humanity at large.

Worldly people now-a-days entertain foolish ideas about a Mahatma. To deceive them and amass wealth, many persons put on Gerua cloth, grow Jata and beards, and young boys and men throw away their clothes and loin cloth and walk naked in the midst of householders and pose for big Jitendriya-yogis. Many learned men waste their precious time in unnecessary discussions and sectarian quarrels and pass for Jivanmuktas. People should not be carried away by the external appearances. They take

a physically nude Sadhu for a great Mahatma in the beginning. After a close contact, they lose faith in him. What is wanted is mental nudity, i.e., complete eradication of Vasanas, egoism, etc. O dear friends, do not be deceived by appearances. You cannot study a Mahatma by a simple casual talk for a day or two. You must closely live with him if you want to have a correct inference.

Though the place may be filled with many sorts of people, yet there are some highly advanced spiritual souls, Mandalesvars and learned Pandits of the Sanatana-Dharma Sabha, who untiringly work and clear the doubts of all aspirants and guide them in the spiritual path. They work for the spiritual go of the public. Again in some silent corners, you will find Some great Virakta Mahatmas and Tyagis. You must hunt out such great souls among the Sadhus, Sannyasins, Yogins and Naga-babas. They will guide you in the right path. Have Darsan of such Mahatmas and get spiritual instructions. Then you will be spiritually benefited.

Grihasthas should not put so many questions as to the previous name, castc, creed, qualifications, relations of Sannyasins. They can talk only on philosophical points with a view to clear doubts. Then and then alone they can be benefited by Satsanga with Sadhus. Satsanga is the easiest and quickest means to change the worldly mind towards the spiritual path and to overhaul thoroughly the vicious and wrong Samskaras. Live in the company of wise Sadhus. The company itself is the spiritual education. Serve them with Bhakti and Sraddha. Attend to their wants. Get Upadesa from them. Then you will have spiritual growth.

When you come to Haridwar for the Kumbha Mela, make it a point to finish some lakhs of Japa during these days. Japa done in holy places on such occasion will have marvellous influence and bestow on you spiritual benefits. For 15 or 30 days observe Anushthana. Take milk and fruits only. Do plenty of Japa. Study Gita, Upanishads, Ramayana and Bhagavata. Have Satsanga and hear the words of great men. Observe Mauna. Do not wander hither and thither. You will grow wonderfully by silent rigid Sadhana. Do plenty of charity. Charity destroys multitude of sins. Serve the Sadhus and Mahatmas. Approach them with Bhakti and fruits in hand. Pray for spiritual instructions. Serve and help the sick-persons. There is a very good opportunity for you to do Nishkama Karma-yoga. Such kind of spiritual Sadhana must be practised when you come to this sacred Mela which comes once in 12 years. Generally pilgrimages to all sacred places

should be performed with the above discipline. Every year people go to Rishikesh and Haridwar, Badrinath and other places. They should all observe the above discipline and then only they would derive the benefits of performing Yatra or pilgrimages.

May God bless you with more energy to do real, sustained, solid Sadhana! May God bestow on you joy, peace, bliss and Immortality!

5. Origin of “Sri Ram” Mantra

(Om Sri Ram Jaya Ram Jaya Jaya Ram)

Once upon a time, Sri Rama was seated in his Council hall at Ayodhya after his return from Lanka. At the time, Deva-Rishi Narada, Visvamitra, Vasishtha and many others were present to give some important counsels to the king.

While discussing religious topics, sage Narada said: “I request you all present here to give your considered opinion in the matter as to whether Nama (Lord's Name) or Naami (the Lord Himself) is superior.” Then ensued a heated discussion on the subject. The assembly was not able to come to a definite conclusion. In the end Narada gave his verdict, “Certainly Nama is superior to Naami. I shall just now prove it by a concrete example before the assembly disperses."

Narada then called Hanuman to his side and said, “O mighty hero, when you salute in your usual way all the Rishis and Sri Rama, do not salute Visvamitra. He is only a Raja-Rishi. He does not deserve equal treatment and respects.” Hanuman agreed. When the time of salutation came Hanuman went before all sages and prostrated before them except the sage Visvamitra.

Then Narada said to Visvamitra, "O great Rishi! Look at the impertinence of Hanuman. He made salutations to all except you in this assembly. You must punish him for this. Mark! How proud and arrogant is he."

Visvamitra was flaming with rage and said to Sri Rama, O King, I have been seriously insulted by your servant Hanuman in the presence of these great Rishis. Therefore, he serves death at your hands before sunset tomorrow.” Sri Rama had to obey Visvamitra being his Guru. At the same time Rama was in a fix because he had to kill his faithful servant with his

own hand. But he could not help it. The news of the proposed death of Hanuman at Sri Rama's hands spread all over the city like wild fire.

Hanuman too was much agitated. He went to Narada and said: "O Divine sage, save me now. Lord Rama will kill me tomorrow. I acted according to your advice. What shall I do now?" Narada said. "O Hanuman, never despair. Do as I tell you. Get up early in the morning at Brahmamuhurta. Taka bath in the Sarayu river. Stand on the sand bed of the river and with folded hands repeat the Mantra 'Om Sri Ram Java Jaya Jaya Ram'. I assure you, nothing will affect you."

The next day dawned. Hanuman went to the Sarayu before sunrise, took his bath and with folded hands repeated the Lord's Names as instructed by Rishi Narada. In the morning, crowds of citizens came to witness the ordeal through which Hanuman had to pass. Sri Rama stood at a considerable distance from Hanuman and looked at his servant with pity and most unwillingly began to shower arrows on Hanuman. Not one could hurt Hanuman. The whole day the arrows were rained on him but with no effect. Sri Rama used even terrible missiles with which he killed Kumbhakarna and other great Rakshasas in the battlefield. At last Sri Rama took his Brahmastra, the unfailing missile. Sri Rama was enraged beyond description. Hanuman repeated the Mantra loudly with intense Bhava and self-surrender to the Lord. He stood smiling at Sri Rama. All were struck with wonder and exclaimed Jaya Jaya to Hanuman.

At this juncture Narada went to Visvamitra and said, "O sage! Control your anger. Sri Rama is tired now. The various arrows could not do anything to Hanuman. What is there even if Hanuman did not salute you? Save Rama from this struggle. Stop him from his effort. You have now understood the glory of Sri Rama's Name." Visvamitra was moved by these words and stopped Rama from killing Hanuman with the Brahmastra. Hanuman came and fell at the feet of his master and saluted Visvamitra too for his kindness. Visvamitra was very much pleased and blessed Hanuman. He praised his devotion to Sri Rama.

This Mantra was first given by Sri Narada to Hanuman when the latter was in great danger. So, O beloved aspirants, you also who are burnt by the flames of Samsara repeat this Mantra and get emancipation.

Sri Ram' is Sambodhana or Pukar, addressing Rama. Jaya mis His praise. Jaya Jaya Ram is total surrender unto Him. While repeating the Mantra have this Bhava: “O Rama, I salute Thee. I surrender to Thee.” You will get His Darshan soon.

Sri Samartha Ramdas repeated this Mantra thirteen crores of times and had direct Darshan of Lord Rama. There is a mighty force or Achintya-Sakti in Ram Nam. Sing the glory of Ram Nam. You can do Japa of the Mantra and also sing it beautifully. This Mantra has thirteen letters, and thirteen lakhs of Japa constitute one Purascharana.

O Narayan, why not you also repeat this Mantra and attain God-realisation in this very life as many others have done!

May Nam be your sheet-anchor. May the Nam protect you, guide you and take you to the goal. May you attain God-realisation in this birth by the uninterrupted repetition of the Names of the Lord with intense faith and devotion.

6. Divine Namapathy

When allopathy, homeopathy, chromopathy, naturopathy, Ayurvedapathy and all other ‘pathies’ fail to cure a disease, the *Divine Namapathy' can save you. Name of the Lord is a sovereign specific, a sheet-anchor, an infallible panacea and a cure-all for all diseases. It is an ideal or supreme 'pick me up' in gloom and despair, in depression and sorrow, in the daily battle of life or the struggle for existence.

There is a mysterious power in the Name. There is an inscrutable Sakti in God's Name. All the divine potencies are hidden in Lord's Name. It is a cream or quintessence of chyavanaprash, Makaradhvaja, almonds, Vasanta-kusumakar or Svarna Bhasma or gold oxide. It is a mysterious, ineffable divine injection ‘1910194.'

You can take this medicine of Nama-japa yourself for curing any disease. You can administer this marvellous medicine to other patients also in your house or elsewhere. Sit by the side of the patient and repeat the Name of the Lord, with sincere devotion and faith, like 'Hari Om', `Sri Ram', `Om Namah Sivaya'. Sing also His Names `Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare, Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna flare Flare.' Pray for His mercy and grace. All maladies and agonies will conic to an

end. Do the treatment of Nama-japa for at least 2 hours in the morning and evening. You will find the miraculous effect within a short time. Both the doctor and the patient should have perfect faith in Lord's Name, His mercy and grace. The real doctor is only Lord Narayana.

Lord Dhanvantari, the physician of the three worlds (who expounded the Ayurvedic Medical Science) has himself declared "By the medicine of the repetition of Achyuta, Ananta, Govinda all diseases are cured this is my definite and honest declaration." In all treatments Lord Narayana is the real doctor. You find that even the world's best doctors fail to cure a dying king. You might have also heard of many instances where patients ailing from the worst type of diseases are cured miraculously where even the ablest doctors have declared the case hopeless. This itself is clear proof that there is the Divine Hand behind all cures.

The Divine Name will eradicate the disease of birth and death and bestow on you Moksha, liberation or Immortality.

The son of a landlord in Meerut was seriously ailing. Doctors pronounced the case to be absolutely hopeless. Bhaktas took the case in their hands. They did continuous Kirtan day and night for seven days around the bed of the patient. The patient stood up and began to sing God's Name on the seventh day. He recovered completely. Such is the miraculous power of Sankirtan.

7. Glory of Ekadasi

Devotees fast on the Ekadasi day (the eleventh day in the lunar fortnight), observe vigil the whole night and do Japa, Hari-kirtan and meditation. Some do not take even a drop of water (Nirahar, Nirjal). Those who are unable to keep complete fast take milk and fruits. No rice should be taken on Ekadasi This is a very important matter. In this Kali-yuga, even if one Ekadasi is observed with dispassion, faith and devotion, and if the mind is wholly fixed on Lord Hari, one is freed from the round of births and deaths. There is no doubt of this. Scriptures give assurance on this point.

The sweat that fell down from the forehead of Brahma assumed the form of a demon and said to the Lord; "O Lord, give me an abode to dwell." Brahma said: "0 Demon, dwell in the rice particles eaten by men on Ekadasi and become worms in their stomach." That is the reason why rice is interdicted in Ekadasi.

If one observes Ekadasi fast regularly, Lord Hari is propitiated. All sins are destroyed. The mind is purified. Devotion gradually develops. Love for God becomes intense. Orthodox people in South India observe complete fasting and vigil on all Ekadasi days. For Vaishnavites, devotees of Lord Vishnu, Ekadasi is a very sacred day.

Now-a-days, many educated people do not observe fasting on Ekadasi days on account of the dark materialistic influences. When the intellect develops, people begin to enter into arguments and unnecessary discussions. Intellect sometimes becomes a hindrance in the spiritual path. Those who have not developed the heart, but who have developed the intellect begin to doubt and question at every step. They are led astray. They always ask `why?' and 'how?', and want the support of science for everything. God is beyond proofs and presumptions. One has to approach religion and scriptures with faith, reverence and purity of heart. Then the secrets of religion will be revealed unto him like an 'Amalaka' fruit in the palm of the hand. Does anybody ask his mother to prove that this man is his father?

Fasting controls passion. It calms the emotions. It controls the Indriyas also. It is a great Tapas. It purifies the mind and the heart. It destroys a multitude of sins. The Sastras prescribe Chandrayana-Vrata, Krichra-Vrata, Ekadasi-Vrata, Pradosha-Vrata for the purification of the mind. Fasting controls particularly the tongue which is the deadliest enemy of man. Fasting overhauls the respiratory, circulatory, digestive and urinary systems. It destroys all impurities of the body and all sorts of poisons. It eliminates uric acid deposits. Just as impure gold is rendered pure by melting it in the crucible again and again, so also this impure mind is rendered purer by fasting again and again.

Young, robust Brahmacharins should observe fasting whenever passion troubles them. Then alone they will have very good meditation, as the mind becomes calm. The chief object in fasting is to practise Dhyana rigorously during that period as all the Indriyas will then be calm.

Withdraw the Indriyas and fix the mind on God. Pray to God for guiding you and for throwing a flood of light on the path. Pray with Bhava: "O God, prachodayat, prachodayat guide me, guide me, trahi, trahi protect me, protect me; I am Thine, I am Thine; forsake me not." Then you will be

blessed with purity, light and strength. Follow this Sadhana on all days of fast, or on Ekadasi days when you fast.

Fasting is one of the ten canons of Yoga. Avoid excessive fasting. It will produce weakness. Use your commonsense. If you cannot fast for full twenty four hours, at least fast for 10 to 12 hours and then take some milk and fruits. Gradually increase your fast to 15 hours and so on till you become accustomed to fast all the 24 hours. Purity, mental and physical, is the direct result of all fasts. Fasts make a man strong spiritually and mentally too.

Manu, the great Hindu Lawgiver, prescribes in his code fasting for the removal of the five capital sins. Diseases that are pronounced incurable by Allopaths and Homoeopaths are cured by fasting. Occasionally a complete fast is a great desideratum for all to keep up good health, to give rest to the internal organs and maintain Brahmacharya. All diseases take their origin through over-eating and verily fasting is the only method to cure them or hold them in check.

Complete fasting helps to control sleep. Control of sleep by taking recourse to tea is not desirable. You will not gain i spiritual strength if you depend upon an extraneous drug. During fasting, avoid all company. Live alone. Utilise your time M Sadhana. After a fast do not take any heavy food. Milk or some fruit juice is beneficial.

Mitahara and Pratyahara are the obverse and reverse of the same coin. The practice of Mitahara consists in taking a little food or drink to keep the body in working order. In the Gita you will find: "Verily, Yoga is not for him who eateth too much, nor who abstaineth too excess, nor who is too much addicted to sleep, nor even to wakefulness, O Arjuna." The practice of Pratyahara consists in the withdrawing of the senses from the particular objects of senses. Then the Indriyas get involved in the mind. When one is fully established in Mitahara and Pratyahara, Parama-vasyam, supreme control of the Indriyas comes in.

Fasting and doing Japa on Ekadasi days is a great purifier. Fasting makes the mind Sattvic and the body light, and removes most of the ailments and helps concentration.

Once the demon Mura oppressed the Devas. The Devas approached Lord Hari for protection. Lord Hari sent Yoga-Maya to kill the demon. Yoga-Maya

carried out the behests of the Lord and killed the demon. Then Lord Hari said to Yoga-Maya: "O Yogamaya, those who observe Ekadasi Vrata will be freed from sins. You will be called by the name Ekadasi."

You all know that King Ambarisha was a great votary of. Lord Hari. He practised Ekadasi-Vrata for one year. Lord Hari was very much pleased with the king. Ambarisha obtained His grace.

The different phases of the moon have a great deal of occult influence over our minds. On certain days of the fortnight, special influences are said to flow towards the earth favouring spiritual contemplation. The 11th day or the Eka is one such day. Just as the outward moon goes through various phases, the corresponding astral counterpart in man's subtle body too makes a circuit from head to toe through the inner centres. On the 11th days of the bright and dark fortnights the astral moon-principle is located at the eye-brow centre and the naval centre respectively, contacting with higher and lower influences. To take advantage of the former and repel the latter fasting and prayer prove of great aid and benefit. Moreover the Pitris from Chandraloka are said to be able to communicate and purify our minds more easily during days like Ekadasi, Amavasya etc.

I humbly pray that all of you may earnestly observe Ekadasi Vrata regularly. You will obtain the grace of Lord Hari and enter the eternal kingdom of Supreme Peace and Eternal Bliss.

8. The Four Stages of Sound

The Vedas form the sound manifestation of Isvara. That sound has four divisions—Para which finds manifestation only in Prana, Pasyanti which finds manifestation in the mind, Madhyama which finds manifestation in the Indriyas, and Vaikhari which finds manifestation in articulate expression. Para, Pasyanti and Madhyama remain deep and unfathomable like the ocean and only Vaikhari becomes manifest in the Vedas originating in Pranava and appearing through the letters of the alphabet and the metres. Even the Vaikhari is not properly understood by men.

Madhyama is that stage which is about to issue through the vocal organs as articulate speech which is the gross form of speech known as Vaikhari. Those who have Yogic vision can only find out the first three. The Vedas as expressed in language are also difficult to understand. Speech has a subtle and a gross form.

The Paramatman who gives life to all is manifest in the Chakras or centres locate the spinal column. He has entered the Muladhara-chakra, with Prana and the subtlest form of sound, Para. After passing through less subtle forms such as Pasyanti, Madhyama that are perceptible to the mind only, He at inst comes out as very gross sound Vaikhari consisting of Matra, measure, Svara, accent, and Varna, letters.

Articulation is the last and grossest expression of divine sound energy. The highest manifestation of sound energy, the primal voice, the divine voice is Para. The Para voice becomes The root ideas or germ thoughts. It is the first manifestation of voice. In Para the sound remains in an undifferentiated form. Para. Pasyanti, Madhyama and Vaikhari are the various gradations of sound. Madhyama is the intermediate unexpressed state of sound. Its seat is the heart.

The seat of Pasyanti is navel or the Manipura-Chakra. Yogins who have subtle inner vision can experience the Pasyanti state of a word which has colour and form, which is common for all languages and which has the vibrative homogeneity of sound. Indians, Europeans, Americans, Africans, Japanese, birds, beasts, -all experience the same Bhavana of a thing in the Pasyanti state of voice or sound. Gesture is a sort of mute subtle language. It is one and the same for all persons. Any individual of any country will make the same gesture by holding his hand in his mouth in a particular manner when he is thirsty. As one and the same power, Sakti working through the ears become hearing, through the eyes become seeing and so forth, the same Pasyanti assumes different forms of sound when materialised. The Lord manifests Himself through His Mayaic power first as Para-vani in the Muladhara-Chakra, then materialises Himself as Pasyanti in the Manipura-Chakra at the navel, then as Madhyama in the heart and then eventually as Vaikhari in the throat and mouth. This is the divine descent of His voice. All the Vaikhari is His voice only. It is the voice of the Virat-purusha.

Just as fire exists in the wood as latent heat, which through vigorous friction manifests as a spark, and then with the help of the wind as small flame, and finally as a big blazing fire through oblation of ghee, so is the manifestation of the Lord in the form of speech. The heat corresponds to the Para-vani, the spark to the Pasyanti, the small flame to the Madhyama and the big blazing fire to the Vaikhari or audible form of sound. Thus the speech is the manifestation of the Lord.

Om Santih! Om Santih! Om Santih!

Thank You